



The Ultimate Travel Planning Checklist

A complete timeline from 6 months before departure to post-trip — 120+ action items

Full guide: <https://yopki.com/guides/travel-planning-checklist>

6 MONTHS BEFORE DEPARTURE

Research & Inspiration

- Choose destination(s) and rough itinerary
- Research best time to visit (weather, crowds, prices, festivals)
- Set a realistic total trip budget (flights, hotels, food, activities, shopping)
- Create a shared trip planning document or spreadsheet
- Research visa requirements for your nationality
- Check passport expiration — must be valid 6+ months beyond return date
- Apply for or renew passport if needed (processing: 6-8 weeks standard, 2-3 weeks expedited)
- Research travel advisories on travel.state.gov or your country's equivalent
- Join destination-specific Reddit/Facebook groups for tips
- Start a Pinterest board or Google Doc for must-see places
- Research if destination requires any vaccinations (check CDC travel health)
- Consider travel companions — align on budget, pace, and interests
- Research loyalty programs and credit card travel benefits
- Sign up for fare alerts on Google Flights, Hopper, or Scott's Cheap Flights
- Check if any major events/holidays overlap with your dates (pro or con)

3 MONTHS BEFORE DEPARTURE

Booking Essentials

- Book flights (Tuesdays & Wednesdays tend to be cheapest)
- Book accommodation (hotels, Airbnb, hostels — read recent reviews)
- Purchase comprehensive travel insurance (compare at SquareMouth or InsureMyTrip)
- Apply for visa(s) if required — allow 4-6 weeks for processing
- Apply for ETIAS (Europe), ETA (UK/Canada/Australia) if applicable
- Schedule a travel clinic appointment for required/recommended vaccinations
- Research and book any must-do tours or experiences that sell out
- Make restaurant reservations for special/popular dining spots
- Apply for Global Entry / TSA PreCheck / NEXUS if you don't have it
- Research destination's public transportation system and passes
- Book airport parking or arrange airport transportation
- Notify your employer and request time off if not already done
- Start learning basic phrases in the local language (Duolingo, Pimsleur)

- Research local customs, tipping culture, and etiquette

Budget & Finance

- Create a detailed trip budget spreadsheet
- Research daily costs at destination (food, transport, activities)
- Set up a travel savings fund if needed
- Research credit cards with no foreign transaction fees
- Check if destination is primarily cash-based

2 MONTHS BEFORE DEPARTURE

- Book remaining tours, day trips, and activity tickets
- Reserve rental car if needed (compare prices, check insurance)
- Book airport lounge access if desired (Priority Pass, credit card perks)
- Research and book travel SIM card or eSIM data plan
- Make copies of all important documents (passport, insurance, bookings)
- Store digital copies in cloud storage (Google Drive, Dropbox)
- Share itinerary and document copies with a trusted contact at home
- Research local emergency numbers (police, ambulance, embassy)
- Purchase any needed travel gear (luggage, adapters, packing cubes)
- Break in new shoes — never travel in unworn footwear
- Research luggage allowances for your airline
- Start a packing list (use our packing checklist!)

1 MONTH BEFORE DEPARTURE

Finance & Communication

- Notify credit card companies and banks of travel dates and destinations
- Order foreign currency from your bank (better rates than airport exchanges)
- Confirm your debit card works internationally (check daily withdrawal limits)
- Set up a mobile payment app used at destination (WeChat Pay, Grab, etc.)
- Research ATM fees and partner banks at your destination
- Activate international phone plan or purchase eSIM/SIM
- Download offline maps for all destinations in Google Maps or Maps.me

Health & Prescriptions

- Refill all prescription medications (get extra supply + doctor's letter)
- Get prescription glasses/contacts backup pair
- Visit dentist if overdue (avoid dental emergencies abroad)
- Get any remaining vaccinations or boosters
- Prepare a basic first aid and medication travel kit
- Research if any medications are restricted at your destination
- Get a signed doctor's letter for any controlled substances

Home Preparation

- Arrange pet care or boarding

- Arrange house/plant sitter or ask a neighbor to check in
- Set up mail hold with USPS or ask neighbor to collect mail
- Schedule any bill payments that fall during your trip
- Program smart home devices (lights on timers for security)

2 WEEKS BEFORE DEPARTURE

- Confirm all flight bookings — check for schedule changes
- Confirm all hotel/accommodation reservations
- Confirm all tour and activity bookings (save confirmation emails offline)
- Confirm restaurant reservations
- Confirm rental car reservation
- Confirm airport transportation (shuttle, parking, ride share)
- Download essential travel apps (airline, hotel, transit, translation, currency)
- Download entertainment for flights (movies, podcasts, ebooks, music)
- Download offline language packs in Google Translate
- Print backup copies of all confirmations, reservations, and e-tickets
- Exchange currency or confirm ATM strategy
- Check baggage weight and size limits one final time
- Research airport layout and terminal for departing/arriving flights
- Begin washing clothes you plan to pack

1 WEEK BEFORE DEPARTURE

- Start packing using our comprehensive packing checklist
- Weigh your luggage to avoid overweight fees
- Charge all devices (phone, tablet, laptop, camera, power bank, headphones)
- Update phone and tablet software to latest version
- Clean out wallet — remove unnecessary cards, add travel cards
- Make sure luggage tags have current contact info
- Get a haircut or any personal grooming done
- Do laundry for all travel clothes
- Test all chargers and cables
- Confirm you have the right power adapters for your destination
- Pre-download any boarding passes to your phone wallet
- Review your itinerary day by day — look for gaps or conflicts

3 DAYS BEFORE DEPARTURE

- Check weather forecast at destination — adjust packing accordingly
- Check for any travel advisories or alerts at your destination
- Confirm airport transportation one last time
- Check in online as soon as check-in opens (usually 24-48 hours before)
- Select or confirm seat assignments
- Do a final review of your packing list
- Clean out refrigerator of perishable items

- Take out trash and recycling
- Water plants thoroughly (or confirm plant sitter schedule)
- Confirm pet care arrangements

DAY BEFORE DEPARTURE

- Final pack — use our packing checklist to verify nothing is missing
- Lay out travel outfit and all items going in your personal item
- Organize travel documents: passport, boarding pass, insurance, hotel confirmations
- Charge all devices to 100%
- Set 2 alarms for departure morning (phone + backup)
- Confirm ride to airport or check parking reservation
- Do final wallet check: ID, credit cards, debit card, foreign currency, insurance card
- Empty or minimize your everyday bag to use as carry-on or personal item
- Load boarding pass to Apple/Google Wallet
- Screenshot or print your hotel address (for taxi from airport)
- Text your emergency contact your flight details
- Check flight status for any delays or gate changes
- Set thermostat to away/eco mode
- Run dishwasher, start last load of laundry

DEPARTURE DAY

Before Leaving Home

- Do a final walkthrough: all windows closed, faucets off, stove/oven off
- Unplug small appliances (toaster, coffee maker, etc.)
- Lock all doors and windows
- Set home alarm system
- Double-check you have: passport, wallet, phone, keys, charger, medications
- Eat a proper meal (don't rely on airport food)

Airport Timeline

 *Domestic: Arrive 2 hours before. International: Arrive 3 hours before.*

- Check flight status one more time before heading to airport
- Drop off checked luggage at airline counter or bag drop
- Proceed through security (have ID and boarding pass ready)
- Fill water bottle after security
- Find your gate and confirm boarding time on the screen
- Charge devices at gate if needed
- Use the restroom before boarding
- Listen for boarding announcements — board when your group/zone is called
- Browse duty-free if international (but don't overspend!)
- Grab snacks if your flight doesn't include a meal

DURING YOUR TRIP — DAILY HABITS

- Secure valuables in hotel safe when going out
- Carry a photocopy of your passport (leave original in hotel safe if possible)
- Keep a backup credit/debit card separate from your main wallet
- Back up photos to cloud daily (Google Photos, iCloud, Dropbox)
- Track expenses in a budgeting app or notes
- Stay hydrated, especially in warm climates or at altitude
- Check tomorrow's weather each evening
- Reconfirm next-day tours or reservations the evening before
- Keep your phone charged — carry a power bank
- Stay aware of your surroundings, especially in crowded tourist areas
- Try local food and restaurants (ask hotel staff for recommendations)
- Save receipts for tax-free shopping refunds (VAT reclaim)
- Journal or take notes — you'll forget details faster than you think
- Check flight status 24 hours before return flight

POST-TRIP — WITHIN 1 WEEK OF RETURNING

- Unpack and start laundry immediately (prevents that musty suitcase smell)
- Back up all photos and videos to computer and cloud storage
- Organize photos by day/location while memories are fresh
- Submit travel expense report if for business
- File travel insurance claims if applicable
- Leave reviews on Google, TripAdvisor, and Yelp for great experiences
- Send thank-you messages to hosts, guides, or travel companions
- Return borrowed travel gear
- Cancel or pause any destination-specific subscriptions (eSIM, transit pass)
- Reconvert leftover foreign currency (or save for next trip)
- Check credit card statements for any unauthorized charges
- Update your travel journal or blog with highlights
- Start a list of 'things I'd do differently next time'
- Restock any travel supplies you used up (sunscreen, medications, toiletries)
- Start dreaming about your next trip on Yopki!