

# Wonderful RETREATS

## GETTING READY FOR ITALIA: A TRAVEL CHECKLIST!

It's almost time for Italy! Are you ready? Excited? Nervous? Don't stress...soon you'll be living *la dolce vita* and sipping prosecco with us in Tuscany! Here's a checklist of things we always do before we leave, as well as our recommended packing suggestions!

### CHECKLIST:

**Months** before our departure, we like to take care of these items:

- **Flight:** you have to get to Italy, after all ;) we try to buy our flights at least 4 months in advance but have had friends get lucky buying 1-2 months prior. The sooner, the better!
- **Passport:** Please DOUBLE and TRIPLE check that your Passport is up to date! Some countries won't let you in if it expires within the next 6 months! Get a new one ordered if it's already expired or renew your current one before the expiration date!

About **2 weeks** before our departure, we start running through this list to make sure all our bases are covered before we jet off!

- **Notify banks:** Before overseas travel you need to notify your banks of travel dates and countries you may use your card in. This includes layover stops, anywhere you might use your debit and credit cards. You can do this over the phone, in person and even online for some banks!
- **Card maximums & fees:** Also when calling banks, make sure you know which banks overseas are the "sister banks" so you have lower/no withdrawal or conversion fees when using your credit or debit cards. It's also good to know what your withdrawal MAXIMUM is in euros!
- **Euros:** I like to arrive in Italy with some Euro in hand for buying water, coffee, food and train tickets without worrying about having to find an ATM. Most banks will let you order Euros in advance online. Even some pawn shops will allow you to buy Euros (often at a better exchange rate than the banks). AAA also can help you get Euros too. We like to land with at least €100 so we have a couple days before we need to hit an ATM.
- **Card and Passport copies:** I always like to leave photocopies of my Passport and credit cards (front and back) with a trusted family member back home. It's also good to have a copy of these in a safe place while traveling in case anything happens and you need to cancel cards!
- **Itinerary copies:** I also share my itinerary with friends/family back home so they know when I'll be gone and returning. We also would like to know your travel plans so we can keep an eye on your planes and plan accordingly for your arrival!
- **Rent/Utilities/Car Payments/Etc:** If you have rent or any utilities that will be due while you're gone, make sure you make arrangements before you leave! It's not fun stressing about these things while your on vacation!
- **Prescriptions:** If you need any medications, make sure you have those ready before you leave! This also goes for contact lenses if you use dailies.

## PACKING:

The hardest thing about traveling to Italy...what to bring?! The biggest factor in this is knowing how much your airline allows. Some are 1 carry-on only for free, others are a checked and a carry-on for free. Double check before you pack! Make sure you also know the weight limits, especially if you plan on bringing home wine or lots of souvenirs! Keep in mind, we have laundry facilities in both places so don't feel like you need to bring an outfit for everyday!

Weatherwise, Tuscany is very similar to Southern California which means it can be both chilly at night and very warm during the days. Sundresses are always a safe bet, as well as shorts and tank tops but be ready to throw a scarf over your shoulders (or even wrapped around your legs) if we go into a church. Larger churches are more strict than small ones so usually a quick scarf cover is plenty and worth it to see the artwork!

Italians are also known for being very fashionable. We gave up trying to compete with them and their heels on cobblestones years ago but feel free to dress up if you'd like! We will be walking a fair amount so pack whatever you'll be comfiest in. We won't have anything that requires super fancy attire though...this is a retreat after all!

## MAKE SURE YOU BRING...

- **Converters and/or power adapters:** These change the prong style of your devices so they can charge in the outlets in the walls but there's a difference between the two...
  - **Converters:** Converters are usually big and blocky and have a space to plug in your device and then plug in the converter into the outlet with the proper prongs. They're necessary when you bring a hairdryer as you need to convert the voltage so as not to blow a fuse or even burn out your device. We will have hairdryers in both locations so you can skip bringing one if you like but some American hair dryers are dual voltage so you can lower the voltage without needing a converter.
  - **Power adapters:** These are little plastic attachments that go over the prongs of your chargers and allow you to plug them into the European outlets. Travel stores sell these, even Ross or TJ Maxx carry them. You can also get them on Amazon!
- **Good shoes:** If you're looking to buy a new pair of shoes to wear in Italy, do your best to break them in before you leave! Fighting with blisters when all you want to do is go out and explore is not fun! We like to travel with 2-3 pairs so we can rotate between them, especially if one is hurting more than another!
- **Crossbody purse:** This is more of a safety precaution to prevent pickpockets or thieves that go for more easily targeted backpacks or purses just resting on your shoulder. We've never personally encountered pickpockets but it never hurts to be cautious.
- **Sunscreen:** We can't emphasize this one enough, pack sunscreen! Italian sun feels stronger and seems to burn us faster. Don't worry if you forget to pack some...the sunscreen quality in Europe is AMAZING and better for you BUT is usually WAY more expensive and sold in smaller quantities.
- **Sunglasses and/or folding hat:** Knowing Italy in the summer, it's going to be sunny! Best to be prepared for those bright days. There's lots of great folding hat options so you don't have to sacrifice being stylish for a sunburn.
- **A scarf or light cardigan:** I usually keep a scarf tied onto my purse strap all summer. They're really handy to have in case of a light rain to protect your hair, cover your chest and shoulders from the sun but also to cover your shoulders when entering a church.

## ADDITIONAL PACKING SUGGESTIONS:

We have [a whole list on Amazon here](#) of our packing suggestions but here's a list of some things we just like to have with us while abroad!

- **Collapsible canvas water pouch:** It's really nice to have a flat water bottle and be able to fill up at a free fountain when you need to, instead of buying yet another plastic water bottle. This saves money for gelato too!
- **Packing cubes:** We questioned these for years but now we're convinced. It's really nice being able to organize your clothes...shirts in one, pants in another. Clean here and dirty there. It makes traveling between multiple destinations a LOT easier.
- **Portable charger:** The last thing you need while out in the middle of a day trip is a dead phone. A portable charger allows you to charge your devices while away from an outlet!
- **Collapsible grocery bag:** I carry one of these on me at all times. They're really helpful for last minute grocery runs or even unexpected souvenir shopping!

Want even more tips? Chelsea, your host, tries to only do carry on with 1 small suitcase and a backpack! With the small suitcase, it's easier to get in and out of airports, as well as off and on trains. Here's her list for a summer in Italy (usually for a full month) while staying in places that have laundry facilities:

- 3-4 dresses or skirts
- 1 pairs of shorts
- 1-2 pairs of pants, 1 pair of jeans and/or one other pair that coordinates best with your tops
- 4 tank tops
- Sleep shorts and top
- 2 sports bras (it's hot there)
- 1 pair of leggings or workout pants
- 1 cardigan
- 1 scarf
- 1 swim suit
- Underwear and such
- Toiletries (the necessities, you can still buy a lot of good products and familiar brands in Italy)

\*Make sure you know what your weight and bag limits are for your airline! A good rule of thumb is if you can't lift it over your head to get in the overhead storage on a plane or train, it's probably too heavy!

Also, keep in mind you'll also be rolling your bags down cobblestone streets at times and lots of places in Italy don't have elevators.