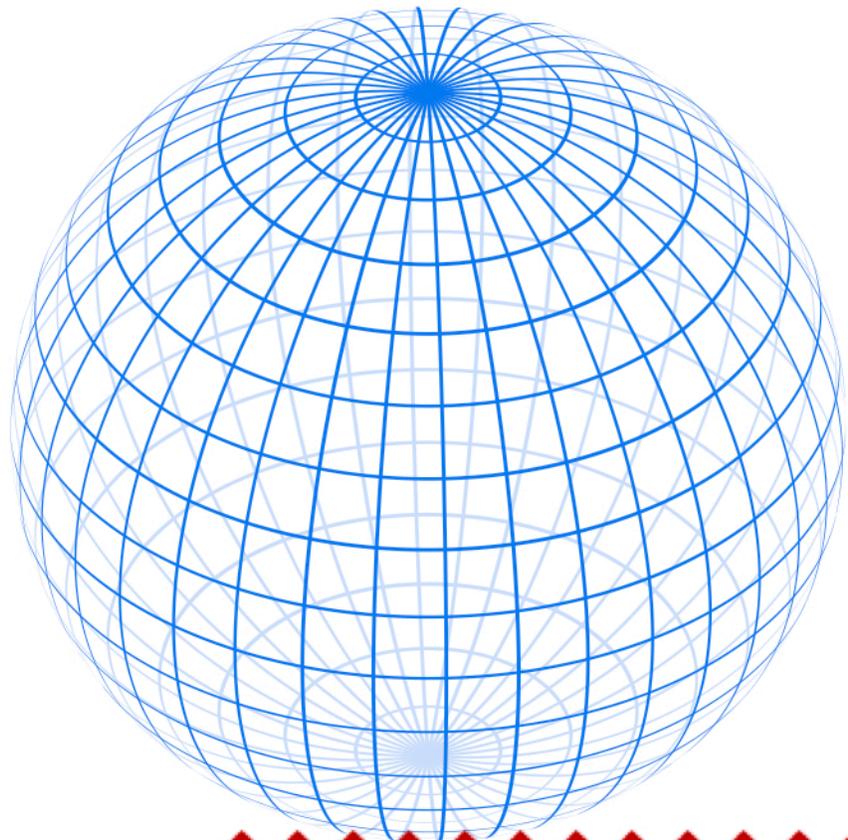


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The Ultimate Guide

Packing for Peace Corps



www.travelingnatural.com

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The Beginning

Getting Started

You're excited! Counting down to the days when you and your bags will embark on probably the biggest journey of your life to date.

I get it...trust me I do. I've done it repeatedly. Packing my life up to move to Belize, then again to Spain. Then again to South Korea and back to Spain. And the mammoth packing event for two years of Peace Corps.

The thing is though. It doesn't have to be a "mammoth" event but the best way to tackle it is by staying organized. Out of fear and anxiety you've been searching the web for blog posts and YouTube videos that will break it down for you. Spoon feeding you tips on what you should pack.

Given my history of "*packing up and going*" I believe I am your best resource for solid and useful information. In this guide you will learn:

- 🕒 How to pack correctly in 5 easy steps
- 🕒 How to take everything your heart desires (and actually need!)
- 🕒 How to leave behind the dead weight
- 🕒 Why planning and packing early are important for your peace of mind!

This guide should be fun and a bit interactive to use.

And if you read all the way to the end but still have questions email me at: tamara@travelingnatural.com

How to use this guide

Before we discuss how to use this guide, I want to thank those of you who checked out www.travelingnatural.com and have downloaded *Packing for Peace Corps*.

I wished something of this magnitude was around when I packing so I decided to create it!

A ton of work went into preparing this and I hope you find it useful. I do want to thank my big sister Kamarlia for copy editing from afar.

As usual if you have any questions feel free to email me at tamara@travelingnatural.com or use the form under contacts on the website.

Let's get started!

- 🌟 This guide is best used when printed out. But it's personal preference since there are some clickable links.
- 🌟 The small stars indicate stories from the field or information I learned once in Botswana/at site.
- 🌟 Big stars give tips that will make your PC life easier
- 🌟 There are tons of designated spaces for note taking
- 🌟 Don't forget to breath! This should be fun :)

-Tamara

1. Pack at the last
minute

2. Forget the checklist

3. Pack with a crowd

**Draw a line matching the
correct red squares to their
“do’s” and “dont’s”.**

1. Pack in Advance

2. Use a checklist

3. Pack alone or
with someone you trust

DON'T

DO'S

.....

STEP 1: THE BAG

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Purchase a sturdy luggage set. If funds are low ask for unused pieces from family and friends. Many volunteers travel with those giant backpacking packs.

I do not.

Why? Porque those packs are for people on the move.

When you leave staging and arrive to Pre-service training (PST), you are going straight to your new host family for 2.5 months. Not back packing around Europe.

Immediately after PST you are going to your permanent site, not traversing from hostel to hostel around Guatemala. So they really aren't necessary. But if you do plan on traveling for a few weeks after your service is over by all means get the pack!

I highly recommend a duffle styled bag with wheels. 360 wheels if you are taking a regular suitcase. *Amigos, trust me on this one!*

.....
Personally these were my 3 bags:
.....

1. [Rio Kyu](#)
2. [Rolling Duffle \(From Bed Bath and Beyond\)](#)
3. Rolling Duffle (**donated from mom**)

Once you have your bags of choice set them aside in a room (or area) where they are undisturbed for future usage.

THE BAG CHECKLIST:

- I have asked family and friends if they can donate a bag.**
- I have looked around in the shops for affordable bags.**
- I understand backpacking packs are expensive and a life long commitment.**

.....

STEP 2: THE CLOTHES

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In that same room (or area) start creating designated piles of clothes you want to carry. I suggest the following categories:

O.V.C.= *Office Vacation Casual*

O: Clothing for work (PST/Peace Corps trainings, important events)

V: Clothing for relaxing (PJs, Lounge wear, weekends, vacations)

C: Clothing for casual events (can also double for vacation pieces and business casual)

[Here is a link to a [Pinterest board](#) for some ideas!]

★ *When I arrived I realized I didn't bring any clothes for evenings out (think lounge hopping/house parties). I purchased a black maxi dress from [Mr. Price](#) and that has served me very well. You can find most of the items you need here in Botswana.*

★ *You don't need to over pack clothes. I honestly wish I packed less and just brought money to buy them in country. You are less likely to be a target for theft if you are wearing the latest Botswana fashion versus America's.*

Jot down some ideas for your own OVC categories:

.....
Office: *Work Clothes*
.....

***Listed under every category are items I actually packed**

2 Pants black, blue

1 long black pant

3-4 colorful blouses/*polo shirts for men*

2-3 solid color button down shirts

Our environment at Peace Corps Botswana is a bit more professional for trainings and the workplace. My role as a Local Government Capacity Building volunteer has me in a government office everyday. This means I uphold the standard of dress code set forth for regular government office workers of Botswana. It's no different from the attire you would see in corporate or government offices in America. Find out from current volunteers and your country director the dress code you will be expected to follow in country.

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Vacation: *Vacation Clothes*
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2 Cotton dresses (H&M, Old Navy, Target etc)

1-2 pairs of shorts

1 Swim suit/*trunks*

1 black/blue *jeans*

2-3 cotton t-shirts or blouses

The items italicized are additional options or items men should consider bringing. Let's be completely transparent and mention more items that I've purchased in country.

I may have unnecessarily bought a denim peplum top from a China shop. I guess I thought I'd wear options from the "O" category for "vacation".

.....
Chilling out: *Chill out and relaxing clothing*
.....

2 soft cotton lounge pants (*I scored a double pack from Costco)

1 Shirt and shorts set (summer sleepwear)

1 hooded robe (will come in handy on cold days and when you stay with host family)

2 t-shirts (H&M etc. Also double as workout attire)

1-2 Sweat pants

★ *My mother sent me a fleece pajama sent in the mail after christmas. This will come in handy for really cold winter nights. I also ended up buying a pair of yoga pants from [Mr. Price](#).*

.....
**Feel free to write down some notes
you may have about your packing
process below:**
.....

The Middle

.....

STEP 3: THE SHOES & ACCESSORIES

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Overwhelmed yet? If you are, don't be! Remember you are starting this process early and spreading it out over a period of time. I started 2.5 weeks before leaving.

But! I was only in America for about 6 weeks and 4 days before heading to staging. And one of those weeks was spent frolicking around Las Vegas with my mother.

I would recommend starting at least **4-6 weeks** before leaving. Just in case you want to make online purchases for last minute items.

Now let's talk about footwear and accessories!

There are only **2** categories for shoes:

Business

and

Casual

TIP!



Pack a box of things you want but don't need until later. Send your family the address to mail once you get to site!

Casual

- 1 pair of black sneakers (Vans style/ destroyed during PST)
- 1 pair of brown sandals (Macy's)
- 1 pair of athletic sneakers
- 1 pair of flip flops (shower shoes when necessary)

★ *OK so my mother is a bit of a shopaholic. She say's she's kicked the habit but with every package of food (mainly canned tuna-meow!), I'll find a shirt and a pair of shoes.*

Honestly all of the clothing and shoes I brought to Peace Corps will be donated once I leave so it's OK.

But seriously, you can buy decent shoes here. I was misinformed when talking to current PCVs (Peace Corps Volunteers) when going through the initial packing phase.

I was also told you couldn't find good shoes in Botswana and Chacos or Teva's were the best option. Though I've never been a fan of those Jesus sandals/stereotypical PCV footwear, I'm glad I forwent buying a pair.

In my opinion they are not appropriate footwear for the office.

However I do regret not bringing my TOM's. I was also sent a pair of black lace up boots. Picture faux Dr. Martens. These are great for the sandy areas of Botswana. Maybe not work for your country of service.

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Accessories

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Sorry to all the men reading this guide! I am trying my best to make this gender neutral but...#*Eish* (common expression in Botswana)

Accessories are one of those “*to each their own*” categories. I’ll only list what I brought that was necessary:

1 good belt

1 decent umbrella (**VERY IMPORTANT FOR THE SUN!!**)

1 necklace (Tigers eye stone for protection)

2 pairs of sunglasses (**VERY IMPORTANT FOR THE SUN!!**)

5-6 pairs of small earrings

Baseball cap (didn’t bring but purchased here/**VERY IMPORTANT FOR THE SUN!!**)

Sun hat (didn't bring but purchased here/**VERY IMPORTANT FOR THE SUN!!**)

20-30 pairs of underwear (received more in the mail)

2-3 pairs of socks

1-2 pairs of stockings (for summer and thick pair for winter)

1-2 ties

Scarf/Gloves/hat/winter jacket-if your country of service gets cold. Coming to Botswana? You’ll need them!

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Accessories Contd

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All the items mentioned thus far should fit into one bag.

Remember you can buy what you need in almost any capital city. **Please don't over pack.** If you have to second guess something, chances are you don't need it! Use the table below to help organize your accessories.

Bring to site	Leave at home

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STEP 4: THE SECOND BAG

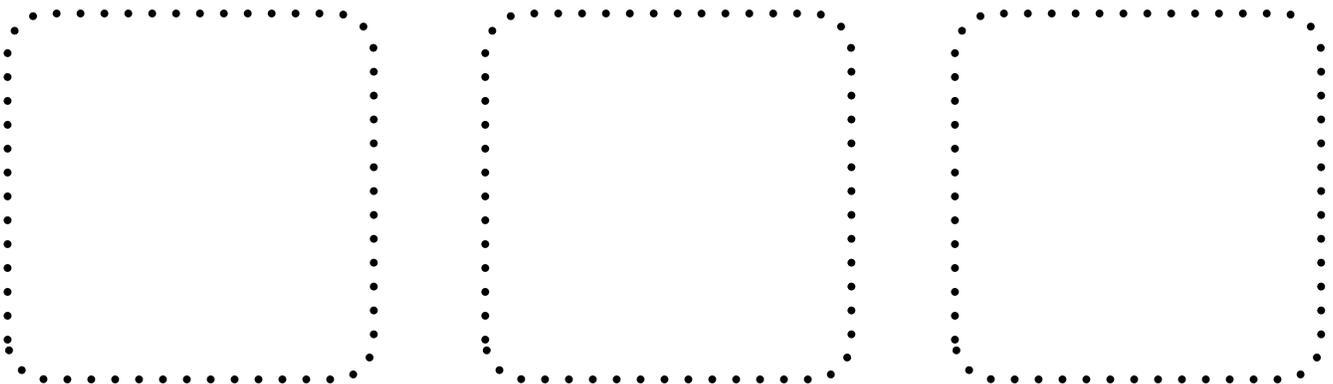
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This bag is the golden bag! I wish I filled it with spices I'd miss from home those first 3 months, more art supplies, favorite snacks (Shin Ramen), more knitting & crocheting supplies.

Originally of my two bags 1 had everything needed during staging, PST and living with my host family. And the second bag had everything needed once we arrived to site(i.e wouldn't need for 2.5 months).

The second bag also included my stock supply of toiletries, skincare products and winter clothes. Remember to pack enough for 2.5-3 months and put into **bag number 1**.

Ideas for bag number 2:



THE END