

There are two types of packers – the meticulous list-makers who start folding clothes a month in advance, and the overnight rushers who, 99% of the time, forget something. Neither way is right or wrong, but there is another style of packing that's somewhere in between, *The minimalist traveller*.

If the mere thought of packing, forgetting something or lugging around 20+ kilograms on your back stresses you out, it's okay. We're going to teach you how to turn from meticulous or messy to minimal. First up, let's define it.



Travelling with minimal gear means more experiences like this.

What is a minimalist traveller?

Okay, you've heard of the 'van life' movement? Or small houses in the woods? Both lifestyle choices celebrate minimalism. A minimalist traveller is someone who carries very little and chooses quality over quantity. There's an art to minimal travelling (and probably a science to it, too).

There's no frantic packing or agonising over a 'packing list'. Minimalists follow their intuition and won't listen to any 'top 10 packing essentials for Paris... or Alaska... or China.' They follow their gut and remain calm by packing smart with the essentials.

Don't freak out if you don't see yourself as a minimalist. It's an approach to travel (and life) that comes with experience. Often, when you're being frugal with money, like backpacking Asia in your 20's. Luxury, all-inclusive holidays won't always teach you this. But that's okay – you can't learn intentionally.



You can adopt a minimalist mindset no matter what kind of adventures you go on.

Adopt the minimalist's mindset when you pack

To become a minimalist, the most important part is accepting the mindset shift. Don't listen to that annoying inner voice that tells you 'pack this!' It comes with practice. The more you travel, you learn what to value and how to pack according to your destination.

But, if you're just starting out on your adventures, focus on developing the mindset. A simple tactic is to question yourself. Pick up an item and second guess whether you need it or not. Think of scenarios where you'll use it. Train your mind to focus on quality, not quantity. It requires a dash of creativity to envision how something can be repurposed.

Like hairdryers, ladies. Do you really need one? If you're staying in hotels, chances are they have one. If not, do the 'I'm on holiday' look and let those waves go untamed. Most toiletry bottles are big and take up a lot of suitcase real estate. Buy small travel-sized bottles and pour your products into them to save space.



Getting into the minimalist mindset is where you need to start.

Know the difference between want vs. need

Get comfortable with simplicity and know how to separate what you *want* from what you

need. It's simple. If you can still continue your day successfully without that item, it's a want. For example, 'will I still be able to read if I don't have this book?' If you've answered yes (because you've got another book or can read on your laptop or iPhone), don't bring it. Use this approach for everything you pack.

There's nothing fun about lugging around lots of heavy gear when you travel. You'll likely pay more for your bag on budget airlines, but more importantly, you can risk missing out on cool experiences. Years ago, after having just got into Prague, I was walking to my hostel and stumbled upon a walking tour. I heard they were good and had some time before check-in, so I joined the group. It ended up being a fun walk and I made friends who were actually staying at my hostel. We went out for dinner that night and to this day, we still keep in touch. This is what travel is all about: embracing spontaneity. Had I been carrying a huge rucksack, I probably would have thought twice.



Do you really need to pack a bunch of books? Edit down your stash when you travel.

How to pack for all seasons

Melbourne gets labelled as the *all seasons in one day* city. Trips to places like this challenge the minimalist but there's one word that will be your secret packing weapon: layers.

Whether you're hiking in the NSW Blue Mountains, soaking up rays on the Greek Islands or exploring the streets of New York City, layering your clothes will work. Tights can be styled with a dress and worn out to dinner on a cooler night – as well as worn as a bottom layer if you're hiking. You just need to adjust the layers, based on the temperature.

Pack versatile items and think in the way of layers. What can you dress up or down? What can you wear independently or as a layer, if it's cold? This should guide you through the packing process. It's also important to make sure you've got the right gear. If you've got a huge suitcase, it's going to be hard not to fill it up. Get your gear right first, then packing will be easier.

I use a 70L lightweight backpack with a small, detachable bag. All my clothes go in the big rucksack, then I store the miscellaneous items (that I'll want on the plane) in the smaller bag.



Versatile items that can be layered and fit into a smaller bag are what you need.

Here are some of the essentials that are always with me, regardless of the location or season:

- Laptop with a protective sleeve (don't forget this part)
- Notebook, pen, and one book (that I haven't started)
- Travel wallet (don't print anything but visas. The rest is stored on my phone to save space).
- (Stylish) sneakers (for exercising & walking around in the day)
- Thongs for the day (and also the shower, if I'm staying in hostels)
- Clothing for one week, depending on destination (weekly washing is standard for a



traveller).



Regardless of the season, I'm always prepared for anything with my edited stash of gear.

Experiences over things

Many studies have shown that experiences bring us more happiness, not things (your new excuse to always travel?) The paradox of possessions is important to explore, especially in your journey to travelling and living minimally. The trouble with things is that the happiness it creates diminishes quickly. Experiences live on in our minds forever, as memories.

When you start looking at life in this way, value-adding through experiences, you'll find you're more cut-throat when it comes to packing. Downsizing is a learning curve but over time, you'll learn to detach from physical items and appreciate travel for what it's really about: personal growth, new adventures, and freedom. I invest in a few quality items that usually last me for years.



Once you start travelling, you'll be able to embrace experiences over possessions.

Adapting as you go

If I need to purchase something quick, I'll do it with the assumption that I won't have it for long and it'll probably end up in the bin before my next destination. I only give myself the luxury of this if I'm in a place for a few weeks. Know how much space you have based on your essentials, then play around with that extra room however you please.

When you buy less, this enriches your travel experiences ten-fold – because you can do more, see more, *experience* more. And, isn't that what a journey is all about?



Thinking minimally can help you add value to your experiences outside of travelling.

How minimalism can be applied to other areas of your life

Minimalism is a skill that you can use in all areas of your life, not just travel. Don't let fear or the scarcity mindset rule what goes into your bag.

Give yourself the freedom to let the trip take you to places you could never have imagined... and do it without a heavy, burdensome bag. *Oh, the simple life.*

Have you embraced travelling with less? Or are you an everything but the kitchen sink packer?