

TRAVELING CALIFORNIAN

Family Travel Packing Checklist & Trip Planner

A printable guide for smoother family trips, easier packing, and fewer last-minute “we forgot it” moments.

Use this before road trips, beach weekends, resort stays, flights, and family getaway days.

From Sid and the Traveling Californian family

Start Here

The goal is not to pack everything. The goal is to pack the things that protect the day: documents, comfort, snacks, weather layers, chargers, kid essentials, and a realistic plan.

Quick rule: if an item would ruin the first 6 hours of the trip if forgotten, it belongs in the carry-on, day bag, or front seat.

The 10-Minute Family Travel Reset

- Check weather at destination
- Download offline maps
- Charge phones + batteries
- Pick travel-day outfits
- Choose one flexible dinner idea
- Confirm check-in time
- Screenshot reservations
- Pack medications separately
- Load snacks + water
- Tell kids the basic plan

7 days out

Laundry + outfits

- Done
- Needs attention

3 days out

Documents + weather

- Done
- Needs attention

Night before

Charge devices

- Done
- Needs attention

Travel day

Snacks + water

- Done
- Needs attention

Core Packing Checklist

Print this page and check items off as they go into the bag, not just when you think about them.

Documents + Money

- IDs / passports
- Cash for tips/parking
- Insurance cards
- Loyalty numbers
- Credit card
- Reservation screenshots
- Emergency contacts
- Boarding passes

Clothing

- Travel-day outfits
- Extra socks
- Weather layer
- Comfortable shoes
- Sleepwear
- Undergarments
- Swimwear
- Laundry bag

Toiletries

- Toothbrushes
- Deodorant
- Sunscreen
- Hand sanitizer
- Toothpaste
- Hair supplies
- Lip balm
- Wipes

Health + Safety

- Medications
- Basic first aid
- Thermometer
- Masks if needed
- Motion sickness help
- Allergy needs
- Bug spray
- Small trash bags

Tech

- Phone chargers
- Camera batteries
- Headphones
- Car charger
- Battery bank
- Memory cards
- Tablet / downloads
- Cable pouch

Kids + Comfort

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Favorite blanket

Change of clothes

Snacks

Wet bag

Small toy/book

Reusable water bottle

Activity pack

Comfort item

Travel Day Bag

This is the bag you keep reachable. If you are flying, it is the personal item. If you are driving, it stays near the front seat.

- Wallet + IDs
- Keys
- Medication
- Water bottles
- Wipes
- Small first aid kit
- Battery bank
- Gum / mints
- Light jacket
- Phone
- Reservation screenshots
- Sunglasses
- Snacks
- Hand sanitizer
- Chargers
- Headphones
- Kid activity item
- Trash bag

Beach, Resort, or Pool Add-On

- Swimsuits
- Sandals
- After-sun lotion
- Beach towels
- Hat
- Pool toys
- Goggles
- Sunscreen
- Wet bag
- Waterproof phone pouch
- Cover-up
- Small cash for rentals

Road Trip Add-On

- Cooler
- Car trash bags
- Downloaded playlists
- Tire pressure check
- Window shade
- Paper towels
- Blanket
- Offline maps
- Reusable grocery bag
- Extra water

Flight + Carry-On Reminders

Before you pack for a flight, confirm your airline's current carry-on and personal item limits. Most airlines use a maximum carry-on size around 45 linear inches, but airline rules can be stricter and may vary by aircraft or fare type.¹

Common U.S. liquid packing rule: travel-size liquids, aerosols, gels, creams, and pastes should be in containers of 3.4 oz / 100 mL or less, packed inside one clear quart-size zip-top bag, with one bag per traveler.²

Power banks and spare lithium batteries should stay accessible in carry-on baggage and should not be packed in checked baggage.³

Helpful Travel Kit Ideas

- 3.4 oz / 100 mL travel bottles
- Packing cubes
- Power bank kept in carry-on
- Waterproof phone pouch
- Collapsible water bottle
- Clear quart-size toiletry bag
- Portable luggage scale
- Cable pouch
- Kids activity kit
- Snack containers

Amazon product searches with affiliate tag:

TSA-size travel bottles | Clear quart-size toiletry bags | Packing cubes

Portable luggage scale | Cable organizer | Kids travel activity kit

Affiliate note: as an Amazon Associate, Traveling Californian may earn from qualifying purchases at no extra cost to you.

Sources: ¹ FAA Carry-On Baggage Tips; ² Port of Seattle summary of TSA 3-1-1 liquids rule; ³ FAA Lithium Batteries in Baggage.

Simple Trip Planner

Keep the plan flexible. Family trips usually go better when the day has one main anchor, one backup idea, and enough space to rest.

Destination + dates

Where we are staying

One main thing we want to do

Food plan / easy backup meal

What we want to film or photograph

Last-Minute Departure Check

Run through this list right before leaving home, the hotel, or the resort.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Doors locked | <input type="checkbox"/> Stove / appliances off |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Thermostat set | <input type="checkbox"/> Trash handled |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chargers packed | <input type="checkbox"/> Medication packed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wallet + IDs packed | <input type="checkbox"/> Keys packed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reservation screenshots saved | <input type="checkbox"/> Water bottles filled |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Snacks packed | <input type="checkbox"/> Kids used bathroom |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Car has fuel / charge | <input type="checkbox"/> Destination entered |
| <input type="checkbox"/> House lights set | <input type="checkbox"/> Final room sweep |

A calmer trip starts before the bags hit the car.

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