

TRAVEL FACTS & TIPS

CLIMATE: Spring is one of the better times of the year to visit Paris, Luzern, Salzburg, and our destinations in Germany. The more popular sights are not so crowded and the weather is pleasant. Be prepared for unexpected cool days and rain – a warm jacket, a sweater, and an umbrella should cover every weather contingency.

CRIME: Avoid flashing expensive jewelry or camera equipment, which only attracts unwanted attention. Baggage should never be left unattended. Cash, debit/credit cards, and passports should be carried in a belt or pouch on your person, under your clothing, at all times! It is just too easy to forget a purse, or have it or a fanny pack snatched from you. It is an excellent idea to have photocopies of your important documents and to keep them in a safe place, separate from the originals. Because Americans have been targeted at home and abroad by terrorists, it is a very good idea not to mark yourself as an American by wearing sweats, tennis shoes, blue jeans, or articles of clothing displaying an American flag or a facsimile of one.

CUSTOMS (US): You may bring home \$800 worth of goods duty-free. Printed matter, dolls and toys may be brought home duty-free. So can fine art and *bona fide* antiques 100 years old or older. Gifts valued at \$100 or less may be mailed to the US duty-free, with a limit of one package per day per addressee, and do not count as part of your exemption. There are very strict restrictions on the animal products that travelers may bring into the U.S. As a general rule, if goods are cooked and in shelf-stable (does not require refrigeration) packaging such as cans or other hermetically sealed containers AND they are not from a country affected with various diseases such as Avian influenza, Mad Cow disease, Swine Fever, Exotic Newcastle Disease, etc., they may be admissible.

ELECTRICITY: If you plan to bring an electric hair-dryer or other electrical devices, buy travel-sized, dual-voltage models and the appropriate socket adapters. Adaptors are available at most luggage shops and at Radio Shack®. If you don't have dual-voltage appliances, you will need a converter in addition to the socket adapters, and we do not recommend it – even if you get it right, chances are you'll cause a power outage in the hotel. Hotels sometimes have 110-volt outlets for low-wattage appliances near the sink, marked FOR SHAVERS ONLY. Don't use them for high-wattage appliances like blow-dryers or curling irons. The current is 220 volts, 50 cycles AC at all our destinations. Wall outlets take Continental-type socket adapters, with two round prongs.

INSURANCE: We strongly recommend the purchase of a travel protection plan that provides, at a minimum, medical evacuation and repatriation, and lost luggage coverage. If your existing health insurance does not cover out-of-country hospital visits and procedures, your travel insurance plan should also include medical coverage. (You will have to pay all medical costs up front and be reimbursed later.) Medicare and Medicaid do not provide coverage for medical costs outside the U.S.

LANGUAGE: The language of France is – you guessed it – French! A well-known character is the American or lapsed Canadian who returns from a trip to France and denounces the ever-so-rude French. But it is amazing how a word or two of halting French will change a disposition. At the very least, try to learn a few numbers, basic greetings, and, above all, the life raft – “*Parlez-vous anglais?*” As it turns out, many people do speak a passable English and will use it liberally if you demonstrate the basic courtesy of greeting them in their language. Don't be bashful!

The Swiss, Austrians, and Germans speak German, though some areas of Switzerland speak French. But like France, you will find that virtually everyone in touristed areas also speaks English. Nevertheless, they will really appreciate any attempt you make to speak their language, even if you don't get it quite right – so have some fun with a few phrases!

LAUNDRY: Take hand-washables! Laundromats are few and far between, and very inconvenient.

MONEY: The currency of France, Austria, and Germany is the euro (€, EUR). The Swiss maintain their own franc (F, CHF), but adeptly accept any world currency, always issuing change in Swiss francs. The value of your native currency relative to the euro and the Swiss franc fluctuates daily.

We recommend that you buy some euro before you leave home so that you have some local currency available until you can get to a bank. Call your local bank to inquire if they offer this service. If not, you can order foreign currency online from Travelex or American Express®. Their exchange rates may not be as favorable as a bank's, assuming you can find a bank that offers the service; but the convenience and safety of having your foreign currency delivered to your home via Federal Express are often worth the slightly higher expense.

We do not recommend traveler's checks. Local merchants are loath to accept traveler's checks because banks charge large fees to cash them out. Banks tend to charge high commissions or hide the commission in lower rates, as do the exchange offices. Hotels are most amenable to exchanging your traveler's checks, but hotel exchange rates are notoriously unfavorable. Traveler's checks are an anachronism, since ATMs make cash accessible just about anywhere, anytime.

A debit or credit card is an asset to travel abroad. In our experience, Mastercard or VISA is the most usable in Europe. It is a good idea to call your card company in advance to advise them of your travel dates and destinations. Otherwise they might assume your card has been stolen when they see charges coming in from Europe, and disable its use.

Many ATMs are tied to international networks such as Cirrus, Plus, and Visa. You can use your debit card at ATMs to

withdraw money from an account, or get cash advances on a credit card account, if your card has been programmed with a PIN. Check in advance on limits on withdrawals and cash advances within specified periods. Ask whether your bank card or credit card PIN will need to be reprogrammed for use overseas (commonly 4 digits). If you know your PIN as a word, learn the numerical equivalent since foreign keypads sometimes show only numbers, no letters.

Cash is, of course, the most efficient method of payment everywhere we go on the Puppentour™. Both the euro and the Swiss franc are decimal-based monetary systems.

One euro is made up of 100 cents. There are eight coins denominated in 2€ and 1€, and 50, 20, 10, 5, 2 and 1 cents. There are seven euro notes. In different colors and sizes, they are denominated 500, 200, 100, 50, 20, 10 and 5 euro. Euro notes and coins can be used in any participating European Union country.

One Swiss franc is made up of 100 centimes. Bank notes are issued in denominations of 10, 20, 50, 100, 500, and 1,000 francs, and coins are minted as 5, 10, 20, and 50 centimes, and 1, 2, and 5 francs.

BUSINESS HOURS: PARIS: Opening hours in Paris are erratic, as befits a nation of individualists. Most museums close 1 day a week (often Tue) and national holidays; hours tend to be from 9:30am to 5pm. Some museums, particularly the smaller ones, close for lunch from noon to 2pm. Most museums are open Saturday, but many close Sunday morning and reopen in the afternoon. Generally, offices are open Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm, but don't count on it – always call first. Large stores are open from 9 or 9:30am (often 10am) to 6 or 7pm without a break for lunch. Some shops, particularly those operated by non-native French owners, open at 8am and close at 8 or 9pm. In some small stores, the lunch break can last 3 hours, beginning at 1pm.

BUSINESS HOURS: LUZERN: Banks are usually open Monday through Friday from 8:30am to 4:30pm (closed on legal holidays). Foreign currency may be exchanged at the main train station daily from 8am to 10pm. Most business offices are open Monday to Friday 8am to noon and 2 to 6pm. Shops are usually open Monday to Friday 8am to 12:15pm and 1:30 to 6:30pm, and on Saturday 9am to 4pm. Shops and supermarkets in the main train station are open on Sundays -- generally between 11am and 4pm. Most shops don't close during the lunch hour, although many do close on Monday morning.

BUSINESS HOURS: SALZBURG: Most shops and stores are open Monday to Friday 9am to 6pm. Some smaller shops shut down at noon for a lunch break, which can last 1 or 2 hours. Saturday hours in general are 9am to noon. Salzburg observes *langer Samstag*, which means that on the first Saturday of every month, most stores stay open 9am to 5pm. Banks are open Monday to Friday, 8am to noon and 2 to 4:30pm.

BUSINESS HOURS: GERMANY: Most banks are open Monday to Friday 8:30am to 1pm and 2:30 to 4pm (Thu to 5:30pm). Most businesses are open Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm and on Saturday from 9am to 1pm. Store hours vary from town to town, but shops are generally open Monday to Friday 9 or 10am to 6 or 6:30pm (Thu to 8:30pm). Saturday hours are generally from 9am to 1 or 2pm, except on the first Saturday of the month, when stores may remain open until 4pm.

PASSPORTS & VISAS: France, Switzerland, Austria, and Germany are all parties to the Schengen Agreement – once you enter one Schengen country you may travel within the member countries continuously for up to 90 days in a 6-month period, without having to show your passport when crossing country borders. US, Canadian, and Australian citizens need only a passport, valid for at least three months beyond the duration of their trip, to enter France and travel through Switzerland, Austria, and Germany on the Puppentour™.

Whether you're applying in person or by mail, US citizens can download passport applications from the US Department of State website. For general information, call the National Passport Agency (202-647-0518).

If your passport is lost or stolen abroad, report the loss immediately to your nearest embassy or consulate, and to the local police. If you can provide the consular officer with the information contained in the passport, he or she will usually be able to issue you a new passport promptly. For this reason, keep a photocopy of the data page of your passport in a separate place. Also leave a photocopy with a relative or friend at home.

PHONE CALLS: Before making a phone call home from your hotel room, find out from the front desk what the per minute charges are going to be. Rates are often quite competitive, but it pays to check so you don't have any surprises at the end of your stay.

One of the least expensive ways to call the U.S. from abroad is to purchase a local calling card, usually available at a news or tobacco shop. The cards are normally offered by the national phone company of the country and provide good value. A limitation of using local calling cards, however, is that you need to find a pay phone and cannot call from the comfort of your room; and if the phone does not have a menu in English, you may need to speak to an operator who may or may not speak English.

Consider signing up for a calling card from a US-based telephone carrier such as AT&T. There is no fee for signing up and these cards allow you to use the carrier's network to place calls from abroad to home. The cost of these calls will be charged to your home phone.

While calling cards remain an option for placing calls from abroad, cell phones equipped to make international calls that don't cost a fortune are in high demand from travelers. A number of companies, from network providers to rental agencies, have responded in kind. For a variety of options – renting an international cell phone, buying an international SIM card for your existing GSM cell phone, or purchasing an inexpensive international cell phone package – we suggest checking out the website of Telestial (www.telestial.com).

SAFETY: Use common sense, especially after dark and particularly in large cities. Don't go out alone. Walk on well-lit, busy streets. Look alert and aware – a purposeful pace helps deter trouble wherever you go. Store valuables in a hotel safe or, better yet, leave them at home! Keep a sharp eye (and hand) on handbags and backpacks; do not hang them from a chair in restaurants. Carry wallets in inside or front pockets rather than hip pockets. Use ATMs in daylight, preferably in an indoor location with security guards.

SHIPPING: Shipping packages home from Europe is expensive. We recommend that you pack and carry with you your most precious and fragile acquisitions to avoid breakage and theft. In France, La Poste offers a simple all-in-one shipping solution with the *Colissimo Emballage* range of products, available in post offices, as well as in certain hypermarkets and supermarkets. The prices include packaging, postage, insurance, and tracking of your parcel. To mail a package home from Germany, purchase a *PACKSET*. Available in post offices, they come in small, medium, and large sizes, and include a box, tape, label, and declaration form. Postage is extra.

TIPPING: Tipping need not be considered mandatory or automatic. Too often, tips are taken for granted or expected regardless of the quality of service. Tipping should be done at your discretion and as a reward for good or superlative service.

A tour bus driver that operates the bus smoothly and efficiently, assists with luggage loading and unloading, and points out his favorite local restaurants, is a valuable asset to any tour. It is customary to tip the tour bus driver the equivalent of \$2.00 US per person per day – a collection will be taken up from everyone on the bus at the end of the tour.

By law in France, all bills show *service compris*, which means the tip is included; additional gratuities are customarily given as follows: for hotel staff, tip the porter 1€ to 1.50€ per item of baggage and 1.50€ per day for the chambermaid. You're not obligated to tip the concierge, doorman, or anyone else unless you use his or her services. In cafes and restaurants, waiter service is usually included, though you can leave some small change, if you like. Tip taxi drivers 12% to 15% of the amount on the meter. In theaters and restaurants, give cloakroom attendants at least .75€ per item. Give toilet attendants in nightclubs and such places about .30€. For guides of group visits to museums and monuments, .75€ to 1.50€ is a reasonable tip.

If a restaurant bill in the German-speaking countries says *Bedienung*, that means a service charge has already been added, so just round up to the nearest €. If not, add 10% to 15%. Round up to the nearest € for taxis. Bellhops get 1€ per bag, as does the door person at your hotel, restaurant, or nightclub. Room-cleaning staffs get small tips, as do concierges who perform some special favor.

TOILETS: For the first-time traveler, toilets in Europe can be interesting. Finding them can be an adventure. Using them can be an experience. The public potties in Paris are no exception. The best of them are in museums and big hotels, and the most difficult to access are in cafes and restaurants. There are lots of self-cleaning toilets (*sanisettes*) on boulevards and in parks throughout the city. After each use the toilet is automatically cleaned and disinfected by a motorized mechanism, and a green light signals that the lavatory is ready for the next user. Be advised that *sanisettes* are normally open from 6am until 10pm and the door opens automatically after 15 minutes.

In the German-speaking countries, ask for the "*toilette*" (pronounced twa-LEH-teh). Women's toilets are usually marked with an "F" for Frauen, and men's toilets with an "H" for Herren. Toilets often have attendants who expect a small tip, usually 30 cents. If you need soap and a towel, give something extra.

A few potty-planning tips: always "go" before you leave the hotel; always tuck a pack of tissues and antibacterial wet-wipes in your bag; make a run for the toilet at every museum or cafe you visit, even if you don't think you need to; by all means stop into a cafe to use their facilities, but expect to purchase something; and it's not unusual to find just one facility for use by both sexes.

TRAVEL GUIDEBOOKS: Travel guidebooks are useful and can only enhance your Puppentour™ experience. We like Frommer's and Fodor's guides the best. You can order guidebooks at discount prices from our Puppentour™ website.

WATER: Drinking water is generally safe. If you ask for water in a restaurant, it will be served bottled – for which you'll pay – unless you specifically request tap water: *une carafe d'eau* in French, or *Leitungswasser* in German. Some restaurants will refuse to serve tap water. If you want ice, you'll have to ask for it.

PACKING: Our motto is "travel light!" You're the one who has to wrestle your luggage on and off our conveyance, and in and out of our hotels. If you have to think twice about something, don't bring it. You are limited to two pieces of luggage. Pack separates that coordinate with other items in your wardrobe. Choose two or three colors that work well together, and take only clothes in those colors so everything will work well together. Don't forget good walking shoes and break them in before your trip!

BAGGAGE SIZE AND WEIGHT RESTRICTIONS: In order to manage limited cargo space, each passenger is allowed a maximum of two pieces of luggage. One piece may not exceed 62 inches (length plus width plus height), and the other piece may not exceed 50 inches (length plus width plus height). We suggest that you pack the smaller suitcase with your clothes and toiletries, and then pack it inside the larger suitcase – as you accumulate souvenirs along the way, you will have an empty suitcase in which to pack them. You must carry your own luggage into and out of our hotels, and on and

off our ground conveyance. Contact your airline for their baggage size and weight limitations to avoid incurring excess baggage charges.

CHOOSE THE RIGHT LUGGAGE: Good quality, soft-sided luggage is lightweight, durable, washable, and absorbs shock better than hard-sided luggage. It is also a little more forgiving if you over-pack it! Look for waterproof nylon with a high-density weave, strong double zippers, comfortable handles and shoulder straps, and wheels. It's good to have removable shoulder straps so checked bags don't get caught in luggage carousels.

WHAT TO BRING: Take it from a seasoned, European traveler – the most important rule of packing is TRAVEL LIGHT! People tend to pack far more than they really need or even use. I can't tell you how many of my Puppentourists, who didn't believe this before the tour, told me at the end of the tour that they hadn't used half of what they had brought with them. I take everything I need in one, carry-on bag, including a collapsible bag in which to carry home the souvenirs I purchase along the way. As a consequence, I have no concerns about checked luggage getting lost, which could ruin the first few days of my vacation.

CLOTHING: Pack coordinating separates – choose one or two colors that work well together, and take clothes in those colors so everything will work well together. Choose wrinkle-resistant fabrics – cotton/polyester blends, knits, jersey, lightweight wools, gaberdine, and washable silks are all good choices. If you're not sure about a fabric, crush a handful for a minute and then let go of it. If it's full of tiny wrinkles, leave it at home. Choose durable clothes that can be hand-washed and dried overnight. Plan to dress in layers if the weather is cool rather than bringing bulky clothes. Look for versatile items that can serve more than one purpose. Comfortable walking shoes are a must! Make sure you've broken in your walking shoes before you leave home.

ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES: Buy travel-sized, dual-voltage models and then get the appropriate adapters for Germany. Don't mess with voltage converters – even if you get it right, chances are you'll cause a power outage in the hotel (which I have done!)

TOILETRIES: Use sample-sized toiletries in leak-proof containers. You should leave some room in them, then squeeze the air out before you put the lid on. This will keep the contents from leaking out in flight. Pack these in a waterproof bag. If you run out, you can buy toiletries in Europe.

MISCELLANEOUS: If you need a washcloth to feel clean, bring your own – they are not standard issue in many European hotels. A few plastic, zip-lock bags will always come in handy. Bring an extra pair of eyeglasses or contact lenses (and lens solution – it's expensive in Europe). If you have a health problem that requires a prescription drug, pack enough to last the duration of the trip. Always carry prescription drugs in their original packaging to avoid problems with customs officials. In case your bags go astray, don't pack prescriptions in luggage that you plan to check.

PACKING: When packing your clothes, you don't want to neatly fold them individually as you would in a dresser. If you do, they will crease when compressed. Rolling works well with pants, skirts, and sports shirts. Lay the item face down, fold back the sleeves and then roll from the bottom up. Take two or more garments – slacks, for example – and lay half of one pair on top of the other. Fold the one on the bottom over the pair on the top. Then take the other and fold it on the top. This gives each pair some cushion where you've folded it so it's less likely to crease or wrinkle in the folds.

SECURING YOUR LUGGAGE: Since "9-11", inspectors have the authority to look at the contents of your luggage and will break locks open, so don't bother with locks. Using a luggage strap provides a degree of security, is easily opened and replaced by TSA personnel, and assists you in identifying your luggage at baggage pickup. Luggage is not insured unless you have purchased travel insurance that includes this coverage. Puppentour™ assumes no responsibility for lost or stolen personal effects.

LUGGAGE TAGS: Put your name, home address, and phone number inside your luggage. Prior to departure, we will give you two Puppentour™ luggage tags. These must be attached to the outside of your luggage.

SUGGESTED PACKING LIST:

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adapters, electrical | <input type="checkbox"/> Sunglasses | <input type="checkbox"/> Skirt (2) and Slip, Slacks (2) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Airline ticket | <input type="checkbox"/> Toiletries | <input type="checkbox"/> Shoes (walking) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Alarm clock (travel size) | <input type="checkbox"/> Toothbrush | <input type="checkbox"/> Socks/Stockings (4-6) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Camera (digital) | <input type="checkbox"/> Umbrella | <input type="checkbox"/> Sweater |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cash (<i>euro</i>) and debit/credit card | <input type="checkbox"/> Washcloth | OPTIONAL: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Document copies | CLOTHING: | <input type="checkbox"/> Accessories (scarf, belt, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Itineraries (tour and flight) | <input type="checkbox"/> Bras (2) | <input type="checkbox"/> Appliances |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Laundry soap (for hand washing) | <input type="checkbox"/> Jacket, light but warm | <input type="checkbox"/> Packing tape |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Money belt/pouch | <input type="checkbox"/> Nightgown/pajamas | <input type="checkbox"/> Plastic bags (zip lock) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Passport | <input type="checkbox"/> Panties (4-6 pairs) | <input type="checkbox"/> Travel guidebook |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prescription medications | <input type="checkbox"/> Shirts/Blouses (2-4) | <input type="checkbox"/> Vitamins |