

Official, Non-Official, Packing Tips for Newly Assigned Peace Corps Volunteers

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NOTE: Products appearing in this document are shown as examples only. No recommendation is made or implied. Use your judgement to decide if an item is something that you need to bring. Needs will vary with the country of assignment. The categories of “Essential, Recommended, and Nice to Have” were created based upon the recommendations of members of the *Gulf Coast Council of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers* located in Houston, Texas with over 300 RPCV members.

Essential

Item	Rationale
Pepto Pismol - or generic equivalent	Pepto Pismol will coat your stomach and help decrease the risk of getting common tourist diarrhea which is caused by introducing new foods/bacteria into your non-ready system. Take one or two tablets before eating for the first time in your host country.
IMODIUM® A-D Caplets - or generic equivalent	To stop severe diarrhea quickly. Don't leave your host country home without it. Carry some anti-diarrhea pills everywhere you go. No, you do not “get used” to food or water that contains illness producing microbes or “bugs” such as amoebas.
Baby wipes, or equivalent	Take several packages in resealable packages of ten to twenty to enable easy daily carry. Always carry a packet with you as you can never tell when you might get a severe case of diarrhea with no toilet paper available. Also, quality/cleanliness of bathrooms vary considerably worldwide (not to mention having “to go” in a field or side street).
An inflatable travel neck pillow	For those long overnight bus/train trips. Without a neck pillow, you will stay awake most of the night

	because your head will be bobbing back and forth.
A hooded zipper front sweatshirt.	Very good for overnight bus/train travel. Helps to avoid cold drafts on head and around neck. Also, doubles as a sweater.
A small, preferably self-inflatable hiking mattress	Amongst other uses, hiking mattresses are very helpful when staying over at your fellow volunteers' homes.
A small, lightweight, sleeping bag	Minimum degree of comfort according to your country posting) – Avoid sleeping bags that weigh over two pounds since they will weigh you down when you travel. Amongst other uses, sleeping bags are very helpful when staying over at your fellow volunteers' homes. Consider that a down bag (preferably water resistant) will keep size and weight down.
A sleeping bag liner	To protect against bedbugs, etc. Also, an insulated sleeping bag liner can act as a lightweight sleeping bag in warmer countries.
A light weight "packable," down jacket	Choose a jacket that can be packed into one of its pockets and hence easily fit into a day pack. If you go to a cool temperature area while traveling in-country, these jackets can be a very good fail-safe option to keep you warm. They weigh only a few ounces and hence are very easy to keep with you all day.
For men: a washable light weight blue/black/or olive-green blazer.	You never can tell when you might have to be "presentable." Also, washable is preferable as it beats having to hunt down a dry cleaner.
For ladies: a washable "little black dress" or 21 st Century equivalent	You never can tell when you might have to be "presentable." Also, washable is preferable to hunting down a dry cleaner. Also, select one with a hemline that falls below the knees. Erring on the side of conservatism in dress is always better than the other way around. The same goes for any other dresses or skirts you may bring.
A lightweight, waterproof day pack, or messenger bag.	Enables you to carry essentials with you as you take day trips in-country. Keep-in-mind that day packs/messenger bags that are designed to carry laptop computers will be considerably heavier than a regular day pack, so try to avoid them. You can

	bring some bubble wrap if you want to cushion a laptop that you may have to place in the day pack or messenger bag.
A money belt	The money belt should be designed to appear as normal belt. However, it will contain, on the inside, a narrow-zippered compartment where you can store emergency paper cash, your credit card numbers, and a quarter sized Xerox copy of your passport page with your name/photo/passport number, etc. Do not select one that sits inside your shirt, pants or skirt or outside your clothes in a kind of narrow fanny pack. They are too obvious to thieves and will also make you hot and sweaty.
Sun block	If you are in a country that is sun intensive, use a sun block every day. It will help to prevent skin problems years after you leave Peace Corps service. Tip: Use a children's sun block that is fragrance-free as it will prevent your host country friends from thinking that you always smell weird.
An everyday sun protection hat	Try for something other than a baseball type cap since that will easily tag you as an "American." (https://www.rei.com/c/mens-hats). Also, if you are going to a cold area, make certain that you bring a warm hat, preferably one that covers your ears, along with a set or two of ear muffs. A " watch cap " is usually a safe choice.
A water-resistant phone or, a water-resistant case for you current phone	A wet phone will ruin your day and may not be easily replaceable in-country. Also, with a good water-resistant phone case , if you drop your phone, at least you have a chance that it will still operate.
An electric travel voltage converter and a set of international electric plugs	Electric current and plugs vary from country-to-county.
For eye glass wearers. a spare pair of eyeglasses, and a copy of your latest eye glass prescription. Also, take a hard case to store your glasses.	If smash your primary pair of glasses, you won't have to walk around in a fog until you can get a replacement pair.
Several pairs of Lightweight, quick drying, moisture wicking, non-cotton, travel underwear.	The quicker the drying process, the faster you can get going with clean underwear. Especially useful for in-country travel to keep the total weight of your pack low. In hot, humid countries, especially useful since cotton under is not moisture wicking.
A rescue tool .	An easy to carry tool that can get you out of a lot

	of situations if you are traveling in areas where accidents are prone to happen or a disaster area.
Sunglasses with glass (prescription) lenses (not plastic) or clip-on sunglasses for your prescription glasses.	Useful in any country to which you may be assigned.
Recommended	
A small LED flashlight (preferably waterproof) that fits in your pocket	For returning home on dark nights, finding your way around a friend's dark apartment/house, etc.
Travel pants for temperate to hot countries.	Blue jeans in temperate or hot countries will make your life uncomfortable. They take a long time to dry and add extra weight to your load when traveling in-country. At least one pair of travel pants that convert, via a zipper, to shorts would be handy.
A Leg Wallet	Can conceal your passport comfortably and safely on your body. Use it in addition to a money belt (see money belt recommendation above)
A lightweight travel laundry bag.	The less weight you carry when traveling in-country the happier you will be.
Phone apps	a) money converter, b) first aid/medical tips, c) language translator, etc.
Clothes hangers	Clothes hangers will enable you to wash clothes when you travel in-country and hang them damp to dry, thus giving them that "ironed" look. Make certain that any travel clothes you bring are the washable quick drying type. Bring at least one hanger that is intended for pants/slacks so that they can hang straight down and avoid additional wrinkles. Tip: Blue jeans in hot countries will make your life uncomfortable. They take a long time to dry and add extra weight to your load when traveling in-country. Stick to " travel pants " and be happy.
TSA accepted luggage locks	Very handy for keeping casual prying hands out of your luggage if you must give up control of it when you are traveling.
A waterproof/weatherproof Kindle reader.	It is much easier to carry an eight-ounce Kindle filled with books than one paperback that weights ten to twelve ounces. Pack it with novels, tutorial books for your host country language, etc.

For eye glass wearers polarized clip on sunglasses, or a pair of (prescription) sun glasses	Easy to carry. If you are in a sunny country eye strain will be greatly reduced. If you do not wear glasses to correct your vision, then take a pair or two of (glass lens) polarized sun glasses. Sun glasses, that use glass lenses, are better for your eyes.
Needle and thread sewing kit.	You might have to re-attach buttons or make other minor clothing repairs.
Sharp scissors	Very handy for a variety of situations.
Box cutter	Makes it easier to get into any well-wrapped packages you may encounter.
Sharpie pen	To write addresses on packages you may send.
Super glue	Sometimes things break and need to be repaired.
Hammer multi-tool	Bringing a complete toolbox is impractical. A hammer multi-tool can help when you need to do some repair work requiring a tool.
A 12 in one multi-tool	Easy to carry. Adds additional tools to the hammer multi-tool option.
Packable, breathable, rain jacket	In addition, to keeping you dry, can act as a windbreaker.
Nail clippers, nail file, comb and brush	Easy to overlook, but will be missed in your host country
Nice to Have	
Picture books that you can read with children	
A few photos of your family	Your new friends will be interested to learn about, and see, your family.
Extra thick (freezer style) zip-lock bags in all sizes, one box of each. Can continuously wash and reuse.	Facilitates food storage. With ice cubes made with unsafe water, can place the cubes in a thin plastic bag. Next, place the bag in a glass to keep drinks cool. Tip: Silicone reusable zip-style bags are now available. They are meant to be washed and will be more practical for long-term use.
A lightweight (no more than 2.5 pounds) portable computer with built-in LTE wireless .	Will allow you to connect to the Internet using the cellular network used by your cell phone.
A lightweight, waterproof, laptop case bag .	A wet laptop is useless, and chances are you will

	not be able to easily fix or replace it.
A plastic laundry carousel hanger.	Very useful for drying small clothing items in your home.
A basic survival cookbook and favorite family recipes	Nice to have when you get homesick. Also, you can cook American meals for your new host country friends.
Toiletries (antiperspirant, shampoo, toothpaste, etc.)	There are some countries where these items will not be available or will be of very low quality.
A lightweight hiker's hammock	Can come in handy for hiking and outdoor time.
5-gallon solar water shower bag	Can create a warm shower experience, if plumbing is missing.
Several handkerchiefs.	Tissues are not always available.
Water Shoes	Useful if you are to be stationed in areas where there is a lot of water through which you will have to wade.
A small Double A (AA) battery powered shortwave radio	For use in case you cannot reach the Internet because you are stationed in the boonies. Also, bring an external short-wave radio antenna that you can attach to the radio to bring in weaker stations. Bring extra AA batteries if your short-wave radio does not contain rechargeable batteries or a hand crank battery charger. In addition, use of earphones will help your batteries last longer since they will not have to drive the speaker contained in the radio.
Tide-to-Go instant stain remover or equivalent. . Also, a 22-fluid ounce container of "Shout" stain remover, or equivalent.	You never know when you will stain your clothes while out of your house. Stains at home can be dealt with using bottle stain remover which, of course, will work better. The "to-go" version will also act as a kind of pre-soak while removing most of the stain.
A combination lock (or key padlock).	Very useful for locking doors when you are out of the house.
Large bag of cough drops and a bottle of cough syrup.	When you need it, you will be glad you have it.
Set of household spices that you commonly use at home	Sometimes you just want the same type meal that you could get at home.

A battery-operated hair clipper set	You might not always have access to a barber (or a barber that works under sanitary conditions).
A disaster survival kit	You never can tell when you might have to face a natural or political disaster.
A Pocket knife sharpener	Sharp knives are always handy
LED Head Lamp	If you will be working outdoors at night, this will be a very important item to have.
Hiking socks	Very handy if you are in a rural area where a great deal of walking is essential.
Waterproof (or resistant) lightweight hiking shoes RATIONALE: Useful if you are in a rural area	Useful if you are in a rural area where a great deal of walking is required, and rain is common. Might want to bring two pair, in case one wears out. Also, if you are going to a cold environment look for an insulated version.
A Two Man Tent	Not the most important item to bring, unless you know for sure that you will be out in the boonies.
Solar Powered Hand Crank Flashlight-Rechargeable LED preferably with a hand crank and waterproof	It is always good to have a backup plan when it comes to the need for flashlights.
Stainless steel leak-proof water bottle with wide mouth so it is easily cleaned.	You will always have a safe source of water when traveling in-country.
Packing tape	Handy for sealing any packages that you might want to send