



CRUISES

Packing for a transatlantic cruise

7–14 days, 2–3 climate zones, 2+ formal nights, and one small closet. What actually goes in the suitcase.

Prepared by Demo Advisor · April 20, 2026

ADVISOR TIP

Demo content — illustrative only. This is a showcase of Compass features, not travel advice. Verify anything you'd actually act on.

A transatlantic has a specific packing challenge: you leave a cool European port in the morning, spend 7–9 sea days where temperatures swing, and end in somewhere that could be 40°F or 80°F. Plus formal nights. Plus limited laundry. Here's what works.

The system

Layering pieces

- Two pairs of merino wool pants (don't wrinkle, don't smell)
- Three merino base layers (short and long sleeve)
- One light fleece
- One packable shell (wind + rain)

Daywear

- Two swimsuits (rotate so one's always dry)
- Cover-up or sundress
- Two pairs of shorts or casual pants
- One cardigan or light jacket

Formal night

Most transatlantics have 2–3 formal nights. The dress code varies — "formal," "semi-formal," or "chic" depending on the line. Check your cruise line's specifics. When in doubt:

Men

- Dark suit (can serve 2–3 nights)
- Two collared shirts
- One tie
- Dress shoes (one pair)

Women

- One cocktail dress + one long dress
- Wrap or shawl (formal venues over-air-condition)
- Small evening bag
- Dress shoes — flats or low heels, ship decks are uneven

Everything else

PACKING LIST

- ☐ Passport
- ☐ Cruise documents (printed + in app)
- ☐ Medications (2 weeks' supply minimum, in carry-on)
- ☐ Formal outfit for gala nights
- ☐ Evening shoes
- ☐ Walking shoes (you'll log miles on the promenade)
- ☐ Lanyard or wristband for room key
- ☐ Power strip / multi-outlet (staterooms have 1–2 outlets)
- ☐ Over-the-door organizer (bathrooms are tiny)
- ☐ Highlighters for marking the Daily program
- ☐ Motion-sickness preventative
- ☐ Laundry pods (some ships have coin-op laundromats)
- ☐ Small flashlight
- ☐ Sunscreen + after-sun
- ☐ Binoculars (crossings have wildlife)

What NOT to bring

IMPORTANT

Cruise lines prohibit: irons, candles, extension cords WITH surge protection, drones on most lines, hoverboards, and outside alcohol beyond the allowance. Check your cruise line's specifics.

FAQ

How many formal outfits?

2–3 is enough even for a 14-night crossing. Swap shirts/accessories to vary the look.

Can I do laundry on board?

Depends on the line. Princess, Holland America, and Regent have free self-service laundry; Carnival and Royal charge per bag; Norwegian has paid self-service.

What about a plug converter?

Yes. Most ships have US outlets but European lines have EU. Bring a universal adapter just in case.

How much carry-on?

Enough to survive 48 hours if checked bags are delayed. One change of clothes, toiletries, meds, swimsuit.