



Pack smart for Southeast Asia

What to bring for temple runs, beach-hopping, and traipsing in the tropics

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More than just hot and humid weather to consider, you need to respect cultural etiquette when packing for a trip to Asia. Here are some handy tips.

RESPECTFUL CLOTHING

Regardless of where you go in a Buddhist and Muslim region, dressing respectfully is appreciated. By keeping covered, not only will you not offend the locals, you won't be denied entry into tourist sites like Thailand's Grand Palace, Yogyakarta's Borobudur and Cambodia's Angkor temples.

Clothing shouldn't be too tight and should cover your shoulders to your knees. For the Grand Palace and other places frequented by the Thai royal family, the rules are stricter: long trousers are required (no capris, leggings, fisherman pants or

sports clothing), though women can opt for a below-the-knee skirt. There can be no holes or tears, and shirt sleeves can't be rolled up. Unlike at Angkor, you can't toss a shawl over a too skimpy shirt as a cover-up.

Yes, Southeast Asia can be hot and humid. But because the sun is so strong, you can feel hotter if you expose too much skin. Pack loose clothing in cotton, linen and dry fit fabrics; you'll be cooler than you would be in shorts and a tank top.

You'll also want comfortable walking shoes you can slip on and off easily. When you enter a temple, a home or even some shops, you're required to remove your socks and shoes.

HANDY ACCESSORIES

- **Light cotton sarong** - it can turn into a bathing suit cover-up, skirt, shawl or scarf (helpful in air conditioning and for cool nights in the north). You can cover your head with it in a mosque or under the hot sun. Use it too as a beach towel, bathrobe or even as a bed spread.

- **Foldable reusable shopping bag** - this helps avoid the ubiquitous plastic every shopkeeper hands out.

- **Bandana** - useful for shielding your nose and mouth on a dusty tuk-tuk ride to the temples, as headwear, to wipe your brows with, or soak it in cold water and drape around your neck to keep cool.

- **Insect repellent** - to prevent itchy bites from pesky insects.

PROTECT YOUR ELECTRONICS

Humidity not only makes you wilt, it can affect your electronics too. Store your camera, tablet, phone, batteries, chargers and spare



photo cards in resealable plastic bags, which are also helpful for dust protection.

To keep the moisture out, toss in a handful of uncooked rice or a couple packs of silica gel. Lots of products come with silica gel when you buy them, or ask for extras at an electronics store.

BAGS TO PACK IT ALL IN

The kind of trip you're taking dictates the kind of bag to bring. If you're shopping in Singapore, a small trolley bag will be just fine on the city's smooth sidewalks. Same goes if your trip entails jumping from an airport taxi to a high-rise hotel with an elevator.

But consider that sidewalks in most of Southeast Asia may be rough, debris-filled or non-existent. Stairs, buses, trains and boats are more easily handled with a rucksack or a duffel bag you can swing onto your shoulder.

Your bag – and your entire trip – will be easy to manage when you've packed just the essentials.

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