

How to prepare for a long trip

One of the most common questions mentors get doesn't deal with the CBA, pay, or training, instead it's asking how to pack and prepare for a two-and-a-half-week trip. It's understandable question, many of us came from regional airlines where a four-day trip was normal and a five-day trip was long. Not only are our trips longer, but they cover more ground—you could be in Sydney during summer and Anchorage during the winter in just a few days. So, this week we decided to pass along some “tips from the line” to help you deal with the transition to Atlas schedules.

Packing

How can you possibly fit 17 days' worth of clothes into one or two bags? Well, to be perfectly honest you may not need to. While some of our crewmembers bring larger and multiple bags in order to fit the whole 17 days' worth of clothes, most do not. A good rule of thumb is to pack for at least half the trip and plan on doing laundry at some point. A lot of our pilots make use of packing cubes to compress the clothes. There are dozens of brands and types of packing cubes to consider, some will have two sides and double as a laundry bag, some are fit for shoes, some for toiletries etc. In a standard 22" rollerboard you can expect to fit 3-5 packing cubes, depending on size and how you arrange them. Mix and match for what works best for you.

Laundry

Most hotels that offer laundry equipment will sell detergent and dryer sheets at the front desk, however many people will pack these in a small Tupperware container within their suitcases. While laundry prices vary by location; most hotel front desks will exchange currency to coins as needed. Unfortunately, our contract does not specify laundry availability, consequently it might be a good idea to do laundry if you have the time, even if it's a small load because you may not have one available when you need it most. And, if you are absolutely in a pinch, you can do laundry in the sink. There are videos on YouTube giving advice on this, should it ever come to that.

Climate Planning

Domestic 767 crews have this a little easier than our 747 crews, as you can generally plan for what the weather will be based on the time of the year. While, there is a significant difference between BWI and MIA in December, furthermore as alluded to above the difference between SYD and ANC during the same time frame is even much more significant. For this reason, try to plan on the worst and plan on bringing at least a jacket, beanie, and gloves. A packable down jacket doesn't take up too much space and provide enough comfort for a quick trip for food.

Uniforms

We can't tell you how many uniforms you need to pack, but it is a good idea to have one of them available in a smaller bag that will not be checked. International locations may have different policies regarding luggage and you may need to check a rollerboard you would usually bring on board. Some airlines will not allow you to deadhead in uniform, and some countries require you to be in uniform when passing through immigration as you are on a crew visa. Accordingly, consider keeping a small pouch in your flight kit which contains either a uniform or deadhead appropriate clothes that you can swap into or out of as needed.

Other Considerations

You'll have at the very least a company PCD and an iPad, on top of that you may have a personal phone, iPad, laptop, backup battery, headphones, etc. All of these devices will need to be charged at some point, and while USB outlets are becoming more common our needs frequently outnumber any

available outlets in our hotels. To combat this, many pilots bring with them USB hubs with 6 or more USB outlets. International hotels often have few outlets within the room, consider a longer charging cable and/or an extension cable. And lastly, since you never know where the next trip will take you, consider bringing a universal travel adapter for the various wall outlets around the world.

Conclusion

Obviously, this isn't an exhaustive how-to pack for an Atlas trip, but some points to consider. A few trips in and you'll be an expert Atlas world traveler. It is likely that you will make additions, subtractions, and substitutions to your packing set up over time but we hope this was helpful. Good luck, we'll see you on the line.