

Travel Tip

How to pack for a music festival



Heather Campbell, Staff Writer | May 18, 2017



After partially evading questionable rumors and countless late-line-up posters during the wait for your favorite music festival, you're finally there. But how do you pack for it? What do you need to take? What do you leave behind? — are you? Now, what's next?

Whether you're a complete newbie or a seasoned music festival veteran, smart packing choices are key to avoiding frustrations that can distract you from the very thing you're traveling to enjoy: the music. Here are some tips on planning and packing for your trip to a music festival.

Plan ahead

Before you begin packing, take a long look at your festival's list of items not allowed (the [Bad List](#) is a great resource). Then, be sure to research this list again before getting to town, since the festival. Doing so will save you time, money and suitcase space, with no need to throw out prohibited items (bottle of alcohol, metal containers, etc.) before you arrive. You can also check out the festival's website for more things back to your car.

Flying to a festival that involves camping takes some advance planning. If you pack carefully, you can take along a good portion of your equipment as checked baggage. Items about [checked baggage allowed to checked baggage](#) when flying. For the items you need but can't check or carry on, do a little research before you fly to discover the best place near your destination to rent your gear.

If you're more of a city dweller, it's a big fishy boat at the end of the day, but you can still take [hotels or Airbnb](#) properties that are within easy distance of the festival grounds to minimize your travel time. Since both traffic and parking at festivals have become increasingly problematic, head to the festival grounds as soon as possible, either during service or at festival hours. If you travel alone, look for festival-sponsored carpool programs like [Carpools & Caravans](#). For other ways to arrive or better parking, look at our [travel tips](#) for more information.

Some festivals, such as [Snoqualmie](#) and [Bonnaroo](#), offer lockers for rent on the festival grounds — get out! Renting a locker gives you a place to stash bulky items like a hoodie, a water bottle, your gear, snacks, sunscreen, and the external charger for your phone. The less you need to carry around with you between stages, the happier you'll be.

- External charger / charging cord for phone
- Water bottle
- Earplugs
- Sunglasses
- Sunscreen
- Wristband
- Gum / mints / candy
- Pain reliever
- Clothing with zipper pockets
- Energy bars

WITH BONUS ITEMS INCLUDING

- Hoodie or jacket
- Charger / power bank
- Mini first-aid kit
- Mini hand sanitizer
- Eye drops
- Rain boots
- Mini stress ball
- Bandage
- Printed copy of festival schedule

Pack it up

Once your pre-planning is done, it's time to pack. Beyond your usual clothes and toiletries, here's a list of some essential items to add to your suitcase when flying to a music festival:

External charging/charging cord for phone — Your phone serves as your lifeline at a music festival. It's how you post to social and document with friends when you catch up to sets at different stages. It's your camera, map, and set list guide. It keeps you connected to the official festival app, text alerts and promotions. If you watch, you need to look, your flashlight. Along with a strong, waterproof case, make sure you get a charging cord and at least one external battery to keep your phone powered up. Festival grounds are notorious for connectivity issues — the alternate battery backup — so any means you have of recharging your battery will make for a much less stressful experience here.

Water bottle — Some festivals allow you to bring in an empty water bottle to fill once you're inside and through security, and it's a smart bet. You can stay well hydrated and avoid paying silly-separate prices for bottled water from the festival vendors.

Cap — Multiple items that not only protect your hearing long term, earplugs can also help block out nearby conversations and save your sanity during a band you cannot stand.

Sunscreen — Buy a travel size sunscreen, and keep reapplying it throughout the day. You absolutely don't want to feel your face burn to a crisp right away and then feeling miserable throughout the weekend.

Wristband — If you happen to make your way to a festival, wristbands are a must. They're used to help to bring things, getting you on and off the festival grounds, and even if the festival does allow you to wear them, it's still a long drive home during which you may miss for your friends you traveled long ways to see. Strap your festival wristband on your wrist with the wristband.

Quick-release lanyard — Gait or mini are very helpful when there's no water around. Also, they're handy to have with those new friends packed in tightly around you when you're on the rail waiting for the next band — high fives for all!

Sunglasses — See the band, or sport in the general direction of the stage as the sun sets directly into your eyes, you make the call. Many festivalgoers head out with sunglasses, so if you're not packy about your summer this might be one item you can skip packing.

Rain vest — Hoodies, heated socks, and toothbrush won't show you down if you carry a few. Respirator or aspirin with you throughout the day.

A piece of clothing with zipper pockets — You can throw your essentials in a pocket, zip up, and worry the most shipping and bringing anything, or dragging around a bag.

Energy bars — If your festival of choice allows, bring these with you. They're no replacement for the fancy festival food, but will keep your energy levels up between meals.

Bonus items

If you're one of the many who missed a hoodie or don't mind carrying around a small bag, there are some items to your suitcase to make your time at the festival easier and more comfortable.

Alcohol or jacket — Stashing through a set is miserable. Avoid it if you can.

Scarf — Nothing fancy is needed, just a simple cotton scarf will do. If it gets cold when the sun goes down, bundle up. Are you starting an injury in the morning sun waiting for the next set? Wrap the scarf around your head and neck to cool down quickly. It can also help protect a developing sore throat, or serve as an umbrella during a sudden downpour.

Eye drops — Remote festivals can be windy, having eye drops to get the grit out of your eyes can be priceless. All kinds of eye drops are essential if you're wearing contacts, and a spare pair contacts aren't a bad idea, either.

Rain boots and pants — Pay close attention to the weather forecast, and pack/wear these if there's a chance of rain. With thousands of other attendees, festival grounds really do get muddy and a pair of wellies can be the difference between actually making it to see the band or standing in line hoping to dig out the shoe you're in the mud.

A small roll of gutter tape or duct tape — This one might seem odd, but gutter tape has multiple, irreplaceable uses. It's perfect for about anything you have with you that needs a patch, seal, glue, some string, sunglasses. It's a little more expensive than duct tape, but it's easier to remove and does less damage to surfaces. Also, it's handy for making good sandwiches and padlocks to wear while you and your friends kill time between sets.

Mini hand sanitizer — Not all festivals have running water or enough portable sinks and soap.

Mini packs of tissues — Because portable toilets at festivals can, and do, run out of toilet paper. Enough said.

A few bandages — They're lightweight and take up little space. You don't want to deal with the first aid tent for a small cut, which will likely be swamped with more pressing cases, anyway.

A printed copy of the festival schedule — A schedule printed out can be a lifesaver if you can't get a phone signal at the festival grounds, or your phone battery dies in the day.

There are just a few suggestions for items that have been helpful at past festivals. Without music festival you attend, think ahead and then pack the things that will make your own festival experience more fun, so that you can relax and enjoy the music with your friends and music you love. And if there are things you've heard invaluable at music festivals, share them with us in the comments below.

Always have music festival plans on the horizon? Get started looking your [festa](#), [fest](#) and [get here](#).



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PACKING FOR A MUSIC FEST

By Heather Campbell

» You've patiently endured rumors and speculative early lineups during the wait for your favorite music festival. Finally, the on-sale day arrives. *Click!* Victory—in the form of tickets—is yours! Now, what's next?

Smart planning and packing choices help you avoid frustrations that distract you from the thing you're traveling to enjoy: the music. Here are some tips on preparing for your trip.

1 Avoid dead weight. Before you pack, take a look at the festival's list of prohibited items, usually found on its website. Doing so can save you luggage space. And plan on rechecking the list before getting in line at the festival. This can save you money and time by preventing the need to throw things out at the gate or run things back to your car.

2 Be a happy camper. Flying to a festival that involves camping takes advance planning. Learn about what camping gear is allowed in checked baggage. For items you can't check or carry on, do some research to find places near your destination to rent or buy.

3 Plan ahead for greater comfort. If you are more of a collapsing-into-a-fluffy-bed-at-the-end-of-the-day festivalgoer, book a hotel room or a rental near the festival to minimize your travel time. Look at how to avoid traffic and parking headaches by using mass transit, a ride-sharing service or a festival shuttle. If you must drive, look for festival-sponsored carpool programs that offer prizes or prime



parking spots as rewards for sharing rides with fellow fans.

4 Get some storage space. Some festivals offer lockers for rent on the festival grounds. Get one—in advance, if possible. Renting a locker gives you a place to stash items you only need at certain times—such as rain gear.

5 Pack it up. Along with your toiletries and clothing (including something weatherproof and warm), here are some essential items to take on a trip to a music festival:

- **Phone and charger/cord/battery.** Your smartphone is likely your lifeline at a festival. It's how you post to social and reconnect with friends after splitting up for different stages. It's your clock, map, camera, flashlight and more. Festival grounds can have internet connectivity issues that kill batteries quickly. The ability

to recharge can improve your experience. (Note: A spare lithium-based battery can generally travel in a carry-on but not in checked baggage.)

- **Water bottle.** Many festivals allow you to carry an empty one to fill once you're past security. Having one helps you stay hydrated and avoid buying water on-site.

- **Earplugs.** These magical items can protect your long-term hearing and help you tune out the acts you don't like.

- **Sunscreen.** Buy a travel-size bottle, and keep reapplying it throughout the festival.

- **Wristband.** If the festival mailed a wristband for admission, don't forget it! Replacing one on-site is difficult and wastes time.

- **Sunglasses.** See the band, or squint in the direction of the stage? You decide. Note: Some festivals offer free sunglasses.

- **Clothes with zipper pockets.** Pocket your essentials. Zip up. Worry less. ✈

ALSO-USEFUL ITEMS

Scarf: A simple cotton scarf can help you stay warm or cool (if you wet it). **Rain boots and a poncho:** Pack or wear these if there's a chance of rain. Boots are especially helpful in mud. **Gaffer or spike tape:** Good tape can help you repair key items, such as glasses. **Mini hand sanitizer:** Festivals don't always have running water or enough soap. **Tissue packs:** Portable toilets can run out of toilet paper. Enough said. **Bandages:** You don't want to deal with the first-aid tent for a small cut. **A printed schedule:** This can be a life-saver if you can't get a phone signal. —H.C.