BACKPACKER GRANNY · FREE PRINTABLE GUIDE

Gerri's 81-Year-Old 7kg Solo Packing & Safety Checklist

Everything I pack in one light carry-on bag to travel Asia & Australia solo on a pension — zero heavy suitcases, zero checked-bag stress.

Clothing ~2.5 KG

- ☐ 3 breathable, quick-dry tops (cotton/linen/bamboo)
- ☐ 2 lightweight loose trousers or travel skirts
- ☐ 1 light scarf / sarong (temples, AC buses & sun)
- ☐ 1 packable fleece or light cardigan for flights
- ☐ 1 ultra-light foldable rain poncho
- ☐ 4–5 pairs underwear & 2–3 pairs socks (hand-wash)
- ☐ 1 swimwear set + microfibre travel towel
- ☐ 1 comfortable walking shoes (wear on the plane!)
- ☐ 1 lightweight sandals / slip-ons for hostels & beaches

Gerri's Rule: If you can't comfortably lift your bag into an overhead locker yourself, take two things out!

Health & Medications ESSENTIAL

- ☐ Full trip supply of prescription meds (+ 7 extra days)
- ☐ Keep ALL medications in original labelled boxes
- ☐ Signed doctor's letter listing generic drug names
- ☐ Spare pair of glasses & written eye prescription
- ☐ Electrolyte / oral rehydration sachets (vital in Asia!)
- ☐ Mini first-aid: plasters, antiseptic wipes, ibuprofen
- ☐ Strong mosquito repellent (DEET or Picaridin)
- ☐ High-SPF sunscreen & lip balm
- ☐ Compression socks for long-haul flights

Tip: Always keep prescriptions in your personal daypack — never in a bag that could be gate-checked.

Documents & Money BACKUP TWICE

- ☐ Passport (at least 6 months validity + blank pages)
- ☐ Printed & phone copy of Travel Insurance policy + 24/7 emergency number
- ☐ 2 separate bank/travel cards (e.g. Wise + home bank) stored in DIFFERENT bags
- ☐ Emergency USD/GBP cash (£50–£100 crisp bills)
- ☐ 2 passport photos (for visas on arrival)
- ☐ Printed hotel/hostel address for your first night
- ☐ Emergency family contact card inside wallet & bag

Tech & Everyday Essentials ~1.2 KG

- ☐ Unlocked smartphone + travel eSIM (e.g. Airalo) installed BEFORE landing
- ☐ Universal travel adapter + 10,000mAh power bank
- ☐ Small combination padlock (for hostel lockers)
- ☐ Headlamp or mini torch (power cuts & night dorms)
- ☐ Earplugs & soft eye mask (sleeper trains & flights)
- ☐ Lightweight crossbody daypack with zippered pockets
- ☐ Collapsible reusable water bottle + dry bag

The 7kg Bag Formula (How It All Fits)

Choose a **30L–38L front-loading backpack** (weighing under 1.1 kg empty) plus a small crossbody bag. Use 2 lightweight packing cubes: one for tops/bottoms, one for underwear/socks. Wear your heaviest shoes and cardigan on flight days. Laundry in Southeast Asia costs £1–£2/kg — pack for 5 days, not 5 weeks!

SAFETY AT ALL COSTS · OVER-60S, 70S & 80S

Senior Solo Safety, Insurance & Pre-Departure Checklist

Hard-won lessons from travelling solo across Japan, Thailand, India, Cambodia, Vietnam, the Philippines & Australia.

Senior Travel Insurance Check

- ☐ Verify policy has NO upper age cap (check AllClear, Staysure, Avanti, or InsureMyTrip)
- ☐ Declare ALL pre-existing medical conditions honestly
- ☐ Confirm at least £5M–£10M medical & repatriation cover
- ☐ Check single-trip max duration (e.g. 60–104 days for wintering in Asia)
- ☐ Save the 24/7 emergency medical assistance number in your phone favourites & on paper
- ☐ Email a copy of your policy certificate to a family member at home

Money & ATM Safety Rules

- ☐ Always carry TWO cards (Wise + backup debit/credit) in separate pockets/bags
- ☐ If an ATM eats your card, stay calm — lock it in the app immediately and use your backup
- ☐ Always choose "Charge in Local Currency" at ATMs (decline dynamic conversion!)
- ☐ Use bank-attached ATMs during daytime, not dark street machines
- ☐ Keep only one day's spending cash in your accessible pocket
- ☐ Book buses, trains & ferries online (e.g. 12Go Asia) to avoid border/station scams

Hostel, Hotel & Street Safety

- ☐ Book your first 2 nights BEFORE landing so you arrive rested
- ☐ Look for well-reviewed quiet guesthouses or private rooms (or bottom-bunk female dorms)
- ☐ Always lock passport, spare card & cash in your locker or room safe
- ☐ Trust your intuition: if a driver, hostel, or street feels wrong, walk away immediately
- ☐ Take a photo of your taxi/tuk-tuk licence plate or use Grab/Bolt/Uber where available
- ☐ Share a quick daily "safe & well" WhatsApp check-in with family

7 Days Before You Fly

- ☐ Check visa rules & e-Visa printouts (India, Vietnam, Cambodia, etc.)
- ☐ Download offline Google Maps for your arrival city
- ☐ Download Google Translate offline language pack
- ☐ Install & test your travel eSIM (Airalo) on home Wi-Fi
- ☐ Notify your bank of travel dates (or enable travel mode in app)
- ☐ Photograph passport, insurance & prescriptions and email them to yourself

"Adventure has no expiry date. Travel light, get proper medical insurance, trust your gut, and say yes to the world — even at 81!"

— Geraldine "Gerri" Forster · Read all 33 stories & 10 destination guides at **backpackergranny.com** · Instagram **@backpackergranny**