



THEME PARK TRAVEL GUIDE

The Ultimate Theme Park Packing List

(Europe Edition)



A THEME PARK GUIDE FROM THE THEME PARK TRAVEL EXPERTS



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Europe Edition

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1. How to Use This Packing Guide



This guide is created by Dutch Theme Park Network, a platform for people who love theme parks and want to experience them in the best possible way. DTN is built on years of visiting parks across Europe in every season, learning what works, what does not, and what truly makes a park day special.

I am Jolanda, left on the picture with my (travel) partner Joost on the right. I'm the writer of this guide. I have spent countless days in parks like Efteling, Europa Park and many others, often discovering lessons the hard way. This packing list is not based on theory, but on experience. It is written to help you feel prepared, relaxed and confident, so you can focus on enjoying the magic instead of worrying about what you forgot to bring.

Packing for a theme park is not about bringing as much as possible. It is about bringing the right things, for the right day, in the right place. This guide exists to help you do exactly that.

European theme parks are different from many parks elsewhere in the world. You walk a lot. Parks are often spread out and surrounded by nature. Weather can change quickly, sometimes within the same afternoon. A sunny morning can turn into a rainy or windy evening, especially in parks like Efteling or Europa Park. This guide is written with those realities in mind.

You do not need to pack everything listed in this book. Think of this guide as a menu, not a prescription. Some trips will be short. Some will be multi day. Some will be summer visits, others winter events. Use the chapters that apply to your situation and skip what does not.

Throughout the guide you will see clear sections that separate absolute essentials from comfort items and weather dependent extras. Start with the non negotiables. These are the items you should never arrive without. From there, build your list based on the season, the park and your personal travel style.

One important rule applies to every theme park visit. If it does not fit comfortably in your day bag or locker, you probably do not need it. Heavy bags slow you down. Overpacking turns small inconveniences into long days. The goal is to move freely, stay comfortable and enjoy the park without constantly thinking about what you are carrying.

This guide is designed to work in two ways. You can read it once from start to finish while preparing your trip. You can also come back to it quickly the night before your visit and use the checklists to make sure nothing important is missing. At the end of the book you will find printable lists that make last minute packing easy.

Everything in this guide is based on real visits, real mistakes and real lessons learned over years of going to European theme parks in every season. If something is included here, it is because it proved useful more than once.

Pack smart. Walk comfortably. Let the park do the rest.

2. The Non-Negotiables (Always Bring These)



No matter which European theme park you are visiting, no matter the season, and no matter how short your trip is, there are a few things you should always have with you. These are the items that keep your day running smoothly. Forgetting one of them does not ruin your visit, but it will make everything harder than it needs to be.

Start with your phone

It is your ticket, your map, your camera, your schedule and often your payment method maybe even your park map. Make sure it is fully charged when you leave your hotel or home. A phone that dies halfway through the day quickly turns into stress, especially when tickets, reservations or parking information are stored digitally.

Bring your tickets or booking confirmations in a form that does not rely on a constant internet connection. Screenshots are your best friend. Even in modern parks, mobile reception can be unreliable in queues, indoor attractions or remote areas of the park. Having everything saved offline gives peace of mind.

Identification is another essential.

You may need it for hotel check in, age verification, special assistance services or in rare cases at park entrances. Keep it somewhere safe and dry, preferably not loose in a pocket.

A (credit) card and a back-up one

Payment is easy in most European parks, but it is still wise to be prepared. Cards are widely accepted, including contactless payments, but having a small amount of cash can be helpful for lockers, small kiosks or unexpected situations. You do not need much, just enough to avoid inconvenience.

A small pharmacy

Comfort essentials are often underestimated. Blister plasters or band aids take up almost no space, but they can save your day after hours of walking. Pain relief tablets can be helpful for headaches, sore feet or tired muscles. Lip balm and hand cream are small items that make a big difference, especially in cold or windy weather.

Sun protection is not only a summer issue. Even on cooler days, long hours outdoors can affect your skin. A small bottle of sunscreen easily fits into a day bag and is worth carrying year round.

Finally, bring a power bank and a charging cable.

Even a compact one can double your phone's battery life and remove the constant need to search for charging points. In a theme park, freedom from battery anxiety is real comfort.

These items form the base of your packing list. Everything else in this guide builds on this foundation. If you have these with you, you are prepared for the day ahead.

3. Clothing: Dress for Walking, Not for Photos



Theme parks are not fashion shows, at least not when you want to have fun. They are long walking days, changing temperatures, indoor and outdoor attractions and hours spent standing, sitting and moving. The right clothing does not draw attention to itself. It simply supports your day.

The most important clothing choice you will make is your footwear. European theme parks easily add up to twenty thousand steps or more in a single day. Shoes should be broken in, supportive and comfortable for long periods of standing.

New shoes, even expensive ones, are a risk. If you are unsure about a pair, leave them at home.

Clothing works best in layers. Mornings can be cool, afternoons warm and evenings surprisingly cold, especially in parks surrounded by forests or open areas. A light base layer, a warmer mid layer and an outer layer you can easily remove will keep you comfortable throughout the day without carrying a heavy coat.

Rain deserves special attention. A light rain jacket is usually a better choice than a poncho. Jackets protect better against wind, stay in place on rides and keep your hands free. Ponchos can work for short showers, but they often become uncomfortable and hard to manage during a full park day. Whatever you do, do not bring an umbrella. Rain is almost always accompanied by wind, which makes umbrellas fold, flip or break within minutes. You then have to carry a wet, awkward item for the rest of the day. Umbrellas are also inconvenient in queues and crowded areas, where they take up space and drip on other guests. During special events, such as Halloween evenings, umbrellas may not even be allowed inside certain attractions or zones. Safety rules often treat them in the same category as objects like selfie sticks, because in a scare moment someone could accidentally hit another guest. A light rain jacket is always the better choice.

For colder seasons and winter events, warmth matters more than appearance. Thermal layers, gloves and a scarf can turn a cold evening into a pleasant one. Outdoor queues, evening shows and late park hours feel much longer when you are underdressed. It is better to carry one extra warm layer than to spend the evening shivering.

Some clothing choices seem practical but rarely are. Heavy bags, stiff fabrics and tight fits limit movement and increase fatigue. White clothing shows wear quickly on rides and benches. Long scarves or loose items can be inconvenient on attractions and should be secured or avoided.

The goal is simple. Choose clothing that lets you forget about what you are wearing. When you are warm enough, dry enough and comfortable enough, your attention stays where it belongs, on the stories, the rides and the atmosphere of the park.

Comfort is not boring. It is what allows you to enjoy every part of the day.

4. Your Theme Park Day Bag (What Goes Inside)



Your day bag can make or break a theme park visit. The right bag disappears into the background and supports your day without demanding attention. The wrong bag becomes heavier every hour and constantly reminds you that you packed too much.

Size matters more than people think. A small to medium bag is almost always enough for a full day in a theme park. If a bag feels heavy when you leave in the morning, it will feel much heavier by mid afternoon.

Choose something that fits your essentials, a light extra layer and a few comfort items, but nothing more.

Comfort is key. A backpack with padded straps spreads weight evenly and is usually the most comfortable option for long walking days. Crossbody bags and sling bags can work well for lighter loads, especially if you want quick access to your phone or wallet, but they can become uncomfortable when packed too full. Whatever style you choose, make sure it allows you to move freely and keeps your hands available.

Security is another important factor. Theme parks are generally safe, but crowded queues and busy areas are perfect environments for pickpocketing. Bags that close properly and stay close to your body offer peace of mind. Keep valuables in inner compartments and avoid constantly opening your bag in public spaces.

Think about what you will need most during the day. Your phone, wallet and power bank should be easy to reach. Items you only need occasionally, such as sunscreen or an extra layer, can be packed deeper. A well organised bag saves time and reduces frustration, especially when queues move quickly or weather changes suddenly.

Lockers are useful, but they are not a solution for overpacking. Lockers cost time and sometimes money, and you will not want to walk back and forth all day. Pack your bag as if you will carry it most of the time, and use lockers only for items you truly do not need between attractions.

By mid afternoon, you should barely notice your bag. That is the sign you packed well. When your bag feels light, balanced and manageable, your energy stays focused on enjoying the park instead of managing your belongings.

5. Weather-Proofing Your Park Day



Weather is one of the biggest factors in how a theme park day feels, and in Europe it is also one of the least predictable. You can arrive under blue skies and leave in the rain, or start the day cold and end it warm. Preparing for changing conditions does not mean overpacking. It means making smart choices.

Rain is the most common concern, but it is not always a problem. Light rain can actually improve your day by lowering crowd levels and shortening queues. The key is staying dry enough to remain comfortable. A lightweight rain jacket that blocks both rain and wind is usually all you need. Once you are wet and cold, energy disappears quickly, so protecting yourself early makes a big difference.

Warm and sunny days bring their own challenges. Shade is not guaranteed in every park or every area, and long queues can feel intense in the heat. Wearing breathable clothing, staying hydrated and taking short breaks in indoor attractions helps regulate your energy. A refillable water bottle and occasional time in the shade can turn a draining day into a pleasant one.

Wind and colder temperatures often appear later in the day. Even in summer, evenings can cool down fast, especially in open parks or forest areas. An extra light layer can be the difference between enjoying a nighttime show and leaving early. During autumn and winter events, wind makes temperatures feel much lower than expected, particularly in outdoor queues.

Bad weather does not automatically mean a bad visit. Knowing when to adjust your pace is part of weather proofing. Use rainy moments for indoor rides, shows or meals. Slow down during extreme heat and plan your more intense attractions for cooler parts of the day. Flexibility is often more valuable than perfect conditions.

By preparing for weather instead of fearing it, you stay in control of your day. When you are dry, warm enough or cool enough, weather becomes part of the experience instead of an obstacle. And sometimes, the most memorable park moments happen when the weather does something unexpected.

Weather apps are one of the most useful tools you can bring into a theme park, especially in countries where rain can appear and disappear quickly. Apps like Buienradar (<https://www.buienradar.nl/>) are widely used in Europe because they show short term rain forecasts in real time, often down to the minute. Instead of guessing, you can see whether a shower will last five minutes or an entire hour. This helps you decide whether to wait it out in a shop or attraction, put on your rain jacket, or adjust your plans for a short period. Using a weather app during the day gives you back control and prevents unnecessary stress when the sky suddenly changes

6. Tech, Apps & Batteries



Modern theme park visits rely heavily on technology. Your phone is no longer just a camera. It often holds your tickets, park map, queue times, reservations and payment options. Making sure your tech supports your day instead of complicating it is essential.

Battery life is the first thing to think about. Taking photos, checking wait times and using park apps drains power faster than most people expect. A compact power

bank is one of the most valuable items you can bring. It does not need to be heavy or large. Even a small one can give you several extra hours of use and remove the pressure of constantly checking your battery percentage.

Charging cables are easy to forget but just as important as the power bank itself. Keep one in your day bag and leave another in your hotel if possible. A short cable takes up little space and avoids frustration when you finally sit down to recharge.

Park apps can be very helpful when used selectively. They are great for checking opening times, show schedules, queue lengths and temporary ride closures. However, constantly refreshing them can pull your attention away from the experience. Use apps as a tool, not as a distraction.

It is also wise to prepare for moments without good reception. Save your tickets, confirmations and important information offline. Screenshots of tickets, hotel details and parking locations can be a lifesaver in areas with weak signal or underground queues. You can also consider buying an e-sim so you will have coverage when you're abroad without outages costs. We always use Saily.

Maps are another underrated feature. Even if you like exploring freely, knowing roughly where attractions, rest areas and food locations are helps you make better decisions during busy moments. Downloading a park map in advance avoids unnecessary searching when time matters.

Technology should give you freedom, not tie you to your screen. With a charged phone, the right apps and a bit of preparation, you can stay informed while still being present in the park around you.

7. Food, Drinks & Refillable Bottles



Food and drinks are an important part of a theme park day, but they are also an area where people often pack either too much or too little. The goal is not to replace park meals, but to stay comfortable between them.

European theme parks allow you to bring your own snacks and drinks, especially water. Rules can vary slightly, but in general a refillable water bottle is a smart choice. Staying hydrated helps maintain energy levels, concentration and mood, particularly on warm days or during long walking stretches. Even in cooler

weather, you drink more than you think.

Snacks are useful for moments when queues are long or meal times are crowded. Choose items that handle being carried in a bag for several hours. Soft snacks that melt or crumble easily are best avoided. Small portions work better than large ones and reduce the temptation to overpack.

Park food is part of the experience and worth enjoying. Planning one or two proper meal moments gives structure to your day and prevents constant grazing. If you have food allergies or dietary needs, European parks are generally clear about ingredients and labeling, but it is still helpful to bring a backup snack you trust.

A few small comfort items can make a difference. Wet wipes, napkins and hand sanitizer take up little space and are useful before and after eating. Chewing gum or mints can be refreshing after meals or long waits.

Bringing food and drinks is about balance. Enough to stay comfortable and flexible, but not so much that your bag becomes heavy or cluttered. When done right, snacks support your day without taking over.

8. Families, Kids & Groups



Theme parks are rarely visited alone (although a visit alone is also a lot of fun, we do this a lot). Families, friends and mixed groups all bring different needs and energy levels. Packing with others in mind helps everyone enjoy the day more.

When visiting with children, comfort and flexibility matter more than perfection. Extra layers, simple snacks and small familiar items can prevent tiredness and frustration. A change of clothes for younger children can be very helpful after water rides or rainy moments. For older children, power banks and

snacks are often just as important as they are for adults.

Groups with mixed thrill preferences benefit from planning without overplanning. Not everyone wants to ride the same attractions, and that is okay. Packing items that allow for waiting comfortably, such as something warm or a small snack, makes splitting up easier and more relaxed.

Strollers and bags require some thought. European parks often have uneven paths, bridges and forest areas. Compact and easy to maneuver options work best. Lockers can help reduce what needs to be carried all day, but relying on them too much can slow you down.

Communication is key in group visits. Make sure at least one person has essential information saved offline and that phones are charged. Agree on simple meeting points in case people get separated, especially in busy areas or during evening events.

Packing for a group does not mean everyone carries everything. Sharing responsibilities keeps bags lighter and reduces duplication. When each person carries what they need most, the day flows more easily for everyone.

9. Seasonal Packing Lists



European theme parks change with the seasons, and your packing should change with them. You do not need a completely different bag for every time of year, but a few smart adjustments make a big difference. Below you will find the most useful seasonal additions to your standard packing list.

Spring

Spring days can shift quickly between cool, mild and rainy.

- Light extra layer for cool mornings
- Compact rain jacket
- Sunglasses
- Sunscreen, even on cooler days
- Comfortable shoes that handle wet paths

Summer

Summer visits focus on heat management and hydration.

- Breathable, lightweight clothing
- Refillable water bottle
- Sunscreen
- Sunglasses or a cap
- Thin extra layer for cooler evenings
- Optional cooling towel or small cloth for hot days

Autumn

Autumn brings beautiful scenery and more unpredictable conditions.

- Warm mid layer
- Wind resistant jacket
- Rain protection
- Extra socks for wet days
- Comfortable shoes with good grip

During Halloween events, evenings feel colder than expected. Dress for the last hours, not just the afternoon.

Winter

Winter visits are about warmth without bulk.

- Thermal base layers
- Warm jacket
- Gloves
- Scarf
- Comfortable shoes with good grip
- Lip balm and hand cream

Outdoor queues and evening shows become much more enjoyable when you stay warm.

Seasonal packing is not about bringing more items. It is about bringing the right ones. When your bag matches the season, the park feels welcoming instead of challenging, whatever the weather brings.

10. Common Packing Mistakes (We've All Made Them)



Most packing mistakes do not come from forgetting something important. They come from bringing too much or bringing the wrong things. These mistakes are easy to make, especially when you want to be prepared for every possible situation.

Don't bring too much

One of the most common mistakes is overpacking. It feels safe in the morning but becomes exhausting by the afternoon. Heavy bags slow you down, make queues uncomfortable and drain energy faster than expected. If you hesitate about an item, you probably do not need it.

No fancy shoes

Another frequent mistake is wearing new shoes. Even shoes that feel comfortable at home can cause problems after hours of walking. Blisters and sore feet are one of the fastest ways to turn a great park day into a long one. Theme parks are not the place to test footwear.

No umbrellas but prepare for rain

People also tend to underestimate the weather. Relying on perfect forecasts or assuming rain will not happen often leads to discomfort. Being slightly overprepared for weather changes is better than being caught without options. A light extra layer or rain protection rarely feels unnecessary once the weather turns.

You probably want to buy a snack too

Packing too many snacks is another trap. Snacks are useful, but carrying large amounts adds weight and clutter. Theme parks offer plenty of food options, and planned meal moments reduce the need for constant eating. Bring enough to stay comfortable, not enough to stock a pantry.

Bring Earplugs

One thing we never forget are earplugs. Theme parks can be intense environments. Music, sound effects, crowds and constant movement can become overwhelming, especially during busy days or special events. Earbuds can be a simple and effective way to reduce overstimulation. Even without playing music, they soften background noise and create a small sense of personal space. Using earplugs does not mean disengaging from the park. It means giving your senses a break so you can stay present and enjoy the experience longer.

Avoiding these common mistakes keeps your focus where it belongs. When packing supports your day instead of complicating it, you are free to enjoy the park fully, from the first attraction to the last evening moment.

11. Printable Checklists & Final Tips

Use this checklist as a final check before you leave. You do not need everything on this list. Choose what fits your trip, the season and your personal needs.

Core Essentials

Always check these first.

- ☐ Phone
- ☐ Tickets or booking confirmations saved offline
- ☐ Identification
- ☐ Bank card
- ☐ Small amount of cash
- ☐ Power bank
- ☐ Charging cable

Comfort and Care

Small items that make a long day easier.

- ☐ Blister plasters or band aids
- ☐ Pain relief tablets
- ☐ Lip balm
- ☐ Hand cream
- ☐ Sunscreen
- ☐ Wet wipes or tissues
- ☐ Hand sanitizer

Clothing and Weather

Adjust based on forecast and season.

- ☐ Comfortable broken in shoes
- ☐ Light extra layer
- ☐ Rain jacket
- ☐ Warm layer for evenings or cold days
- ☐ Gloves and scarf for winter visits
- ☐ Extra socks for wet weather

Day Bag Items

What you carry into the park.

- ☐ Comfortable day bag
- ☐ Phone and wallet in secure compartment
- ☐ Power bank and cable
- ☐ Refillable water bottle

- ☐ Small snacks
- ☐ Extra layer or rain protection

Food and Drinks

Optional but helpful.

- ☐ Snacks that travel well
- ☐ Refillable water bottle
- ☐ Napkins or wet wipes
- ☐ Gum or mints

Tech and Apps

Prepare before you arrive.

- ☐ Park app installed
- ☐ Weather app installed
- ☐ Tickets and confirmations screenshotted
- ☐ Park map downloaded or saved

Optional, you bought and installed your e-sim for international coverage at reasonable costs.

Optional Comfort Extras

Only if they support your day.

- ☐ Sunglasses or cap
- ☐ Cooling towel for hot days or a fan
- ☐ Earbuds for overstimulation or long queues
- ☐ Small personal item for kids

Final Check

Before you close your bag, ask yourself one question.

Does everything in this bag help me enjoy the day more

If the answer is no, leave it behind.

12. Final Thoughts

A Note From Me to You

If you are reading this, your bag is probably almost packed and your trip is getting close. I hope this guide helped you feel prepared, but more than that, I hope it helped you feel relaxed.

Theme parks can be many things at once. They can be exciting, overwhelming, joyful and tiring. They ask a lot from your senses and your energy. Packing well is not about control or perfection. It is about giving yourself the space to enjoy what you came for.

Over the years, I have learned that the best park days are not the ones where everything goes exactly as planned. They are the days where I felt comfortable enough to slow down, flexible enough to change plans and present enough to notice small details. A quiet corner, a piece of music drifting through the air, a shared laugh in a queue.

If something goes wrong, a bit of rain, a closed ride, tired feet, that does not mean the day failed. It means the day is real. Adjust, take a breath and keep going. The park will meet you where you are.

Pack what supports you. Leave the rest behind. Trust yourself to figure things out as you go. And most of all, give yourself permission to enjoy the day in your own way.

I hope you have a wonderful trip.

Take your time.

Look around.

And let the park do what it does best.

With love,

Jolanda

Dutch Theme Park Network