

## PCV Pre-Departure Packing Guide

### Peace Corps Eswatini

This following document contains responses from a survey given past volunteers (PCVs) who served with Peace Corps Eswatini (PC/Eswatini) about their advice for packing. This is not meant to be an exhaustive packing list, but to give you some insight into what items you might want to consider (or not consider) as you begin packing for service.

- 2-3 pairs of khakis/slacks
- 1 pair of quick dry hiking pants
- 1 pair of jeans
- 1-2 pair shorts
- 1 pair swim suit trunks
- 1 pair of sweatpants/lounging pants
- 2-3 pairs of athletic shorts
  
- 1 rain jacket
- 1 warm jacket/fleece
- 1-2 sweaters/sweatshirts
- 3-4 undershirts/tanks
- 1-2 tank tops
- 3-4 long sleeve button up shirts
- 6-8 t-shirts (short/long sleeve)
- 3-4 short sleeve button up/polo shirts

- 3-4 skirts (knee length or longer)
- 2-3 dresses (knee length or longer)
  
- 1-2 pairs of pants/jeans
- 1-2 pairs of loose fit casual cloth/linen pants

#### Men's Clothing

- 6-8 pairs of socks
- 1-2 pairs of wool socks
- Unlimited underwear
- 1-2 pairs of long underwear
  
- 1-2 pairs of Teva/Keen/Chaco sandals
- 1 pair of flip flops/Crocks
- 1 pair of tennis shoes
- 1 pair of nice shoes for business casual/professional
- 1 pair of comfortable trail runners/running/light hiking shoes
  
- 1 belt
- 1 tie
- 1-2 hats (sun and cold)
- 1 pair of warm, light-weight gloves

#### Women's Clothing

- Unlimited underwear
- 5-6 pairs of socks
- 1-2 pairs of wool socks
- 4-5 regular bras
- 3-4 sport bras

- 2-3 pairs of either capri/yoga/sweat pants
- 1-2 pairs of tights/leggings
- 1-2 pairs of shorts
- 1-2 pairs of gym shorts (knee length or longer)
- 1-2 pairs of slips/spandex
  
- 1 rain jacket
- 1 warm jacket/fleece
- 1-2 sweaters/sweatshirts
- 3-4 dressy/professional blouses
- 2-4 long sleeve shirts/cardigans
- 5-6 t-shirts
- 2-3 tank tops
- Cute going out clothes

- Few weeks supply of basic toiletries (any favorite brands)
- Soap, shampoo, conditioner
- Dry shampoo
- Dental products
- Deodorant (*solid are not common in Eswatini*)
- Sunscreen and lotion
  
- 3-month supply of prescription medications
- Multi-vitamins and supplements
  
- Contacts and contact solution
- 2 pairs of glasses

### Toiletries

- Small mirror
- Hair cutting shears
- Razor/razor heads
- Hand Sanitizer
  
- Razor/razor heads
- Women: Diva cup/1 month supply of tampons/pads
  
- Make-up
- Nail polish
- Jewelry (faux jewelry)

- Anything for day/night mental health
- Hobby items
- Favorite home food recipes
- Instant drink mix
- Favorite spices
  
- Steripen/Life Straw
- 1-2 Nalgene bottles
- Camelbak Water Carrier
  
- Flashlight/headlamp/solar lights with extra batteries
- Duct tape
- Carabiner clips
- Rope
- Safety pins
- Travel sewing kit
- Command hooks
- Compact hanging shelf for shoes/clothes
- Decorations
  
- Compact umbrella
- Sunglasses

- Personal Passport
- ATM and/or credit card
- Copy of all personal documents

### **Hut Supplies**

- Solar shower
- Hammock
- 1-2 quick-dry/Turkish towels
- Good drying towels
- 1 set of fitted bed sheets
  
- Sleeping bag
- Tent
  
- Watch and/or travel alarm clock
- Date book/diary/journal
  
- Kitchen Items
- Collapsible/reusable grocery Bags
- Cooking supplies
- Leatherman/Multi-tool/Swiss Army Knife
- Zip lock bags
- Non-stick pan
- Tupperware
- Wine Key/Bottle Opener
- Anything from U.S. to show host family
- Collapsible, insulated cooler

### **Miscellaneous**

- Grad School Study Materials
- Exercise equipment
- Personal property insurance

**Electronics**

- An unlocked smartphone that takes a SIM card
- Second phone
- Download the suggested apps
  
- Laptop
- Excellent anti-virus protection
- Keyboard guards/additional protection
- Large external hard drive
- 3-5 Flash Drives
  
- Tablet/iPad
- Camera
- USB cord for camera/phone
- Extension cord
  
- Extra chargers for electronics
- Portable/solar charger
- Headphones/extra pair
- Small portable speaker

**Items PCV's...**

*(Item's marked with an "\*" were especially highlighted by PCVs)*

... WISH they had brought	... have found to be USELESS	... were able to BUY IN Eswatini	... are GLAD they packed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Workout equipment (i.e. exercise bands)</li> <li>▪ Frisbee</li> <li>▪ Contact lenses and solution</li> <li>▪ Makeup</li> <li>▪ Good sunscreen</li> <li>▪ Sleeping bag</li> <li>▪ Duffel bag or large travel backpack</li> <li>▪ Extra Nalgene bottles for gifts to host-country nationals</li> <li>▪ Favorite pens</li> <li>▪ Travel umbrella</li> <li>▪ Favorite snacks</li> <li>▪ Fitted sheets</li> <li>▪ Good knives*</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ More than one business formal outfit/suit</li> <li>▪ Water purification device (PC gives you a filter)</li> <li>▪ Bug net (PC provides)</li> <li>▪ Blankets (PC provides)</li> <li>▪ Hard-copy books</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Training and workplace-appropriate clothing***</li> <li>▪ Non-stick pan***</li> <li>▪ Spices**</li> <li>▪ Household items like hangers, towels, extension cords, etc.</li> <li>▪ Sheets</li> <li>▪ Toiletries (beyond the first couple weeks)</li> <li>▪ French press</li> <li>▪ Batteries</li> <li>▪ Earplugs</li> <li>▪ Resistance bands</li> <li>▪ Soccer ball/sports equipment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Backup glasses</li> <li>▪ Durable watch</li> <li>▪ Nice skincare products</li> <li>▪ Makeup</li> <li>▪ Natural hair products</li> <li>▪ Comfortable clothes like jeans, shorts, sweatpants, t-shirts*</li> <li>▪ Favorite clothing items, regardless of professionalism</li> <li>▪ Warm socks</li> <li>▪ Extra pairs of shoes</li> <li>▪ Crocs</li> <li>▪ Solar shower</li> <li>▪ Cooking knives*</li> <li>▪ Vibrator*</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Power bank/portable charger*</li> <li>▪ Flash drives</li> <li>▪ Extra phone case and screen protector, especially for iPhones which aren't sold in Eswatini</li> <li>▪ Lantern/flashlight/headlamp for power outages</li> <li>▪ Pants appropriate for the workplace (women)</li> <li>▪ Warm clothes like sweatpants, boots, sweaters*</li> <li>▪ More fun/cute/going-out/non-training/casual clothes***</li> <li>▪ Brand new or an extra pair of running shoes*</li> <li>▪ Hiking boots</li> <li>▪ Sturdy shoes*</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Good dental products</li> <li>▪ Good cooking knives</li> <li>▪ Back up cell phone</li> <li>▪ Work-out clothes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Solid deodorant**</li> <li>▪ Comfortable pillow</li> <li>▪ Bluetooth speaker*</li> <li>▪ Portable hard drive*</li> <li>▪ Backup cell phone*</li> <li>▪ Extra headphones/earbuds*</li> <li>▪ Contact lenses</li> <li>▪ Earplugs</li> <li>▪ Sleeping bag</li> <li>▪ Resistance bands</li> <li>▪ Jump rope</li> <li>▪ 35L and 75L backpacks</li> <li>▪ Carbineers</li> <li>▪ Leatherman or multi-tool*</li> <li>▪ Pictures from home *</li> </ul>
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**General Packing Advice from past PCVs:**

“Save some US dollars, exchange them to local currency, and use that to buy clothing, household products, and other essentials in-country. Basically, bring money instead of things. Your dollars go much farther here and you will be able to get so much more for much cheaper – and you won't have to worry about baggage weight! This especially goes for more expensive items like non-stick pans.”

“You need to bring enough clothes to get through PST (*Pre-Service Training*) but don't over pack clothes because it takes up a lot of space. You can have really nice clothes made here, or you can buy clothes. You will most likely gain or lose weight in-country and your clothes you brought from home might not even fit anymore.”

“If you don't use stuff a lot at home (like a tent or hiking boots) you probably won't use them here and could borrow or purchase if needed.”

“Don’t pack white clothing, especially shoes. There is too much dirt everywhere.”

“Shoes are the one item of clothing I don’t recommend purchasing in Eswatini because they are not durable and low quality, especially athletic shoes.”

“Prioritize comfort items over anything else. If it gives you joy, bring it over something you think is more ‘functional.’”

“Lots of Swatis will ask you to share media like movies or TV shows with them. To avoid getting viruses, bring a handful of small flash drives, 8GB or so, that you can give away.”

“Keep in mind that you are going to need to hand-wash anything that you bring. Make sure clothes are durable enough to stand-up to hand-scrubbing, and travel-mugs or kitchen tools won’t collect gunk in hard-to reach places.”

“If you have or want to start a hobby, ask us whether you can get the materials here. There’s nothing worse than looking at that box of unused art supplies that took up the space of 5 pairs of underwear, realizing you could have just bought them here if you wanted to start painting.”

“When they say ‘don’t bring anything you aren’t prepared to lose’, they aren’t just talking about lost luggage or misplacing something. Almost everything you bring is going to get worn out, beaten up, and maybe broken. Some things will be fine, but don’t assume that when you bring it!”

### **Additional Advice for Pre-Departure Preparations:**

1. You will not have WiFi access for multiple months, and even then it will be very low bandwidth. You can buy mobile data, but it is expensive on a PC budget. Therefore:
  - a. **MAKE SURE YOUR HARD DRIVES ARE FORMATTED BEFORE YOU LEAVE THE US!** Make sure they are ready to be used with both Mac and Windows.
  - b. Download audiobooks and podcasts before departure since they are at times too large to download in Eswatini.
  - c. If you can download any music outside of a streaming service that would be good. Most PCVs use Spotify, but it will often spontaneously un-download all of your music. Spotify is also not able to be downloaded in-country, so make sure it is downloaded beforehand.
  - d. Do not anticipate having WiFi time at the airports or any time during PST to do anything substantial.

- e. Before you come, download all updates, apps, and games (phone or computer) that you might be even vaguely interested in using during service. You can always delete them, but you probably won't be able to download them.
2. *Calibre* is a handy program to have downloaded, since it lets you format e-books for use on the provided Kindle or your phone.
3. If you want to keep your American phone number but don't want to pay your provider to keep it active, Google Voice is a nice alternative. For \$20, they will port your phone number to an online service, and you can still receive texts and voicemails. You can also send texts for free using data/WiFi. However, make sure you do this while still in the States, because it is not available outside of the US and will be a giant pain to do here.
4. You won't have a lot of opportunity to convert money during PST. Essentials will be provided or can be purchased on the PC Stipend, but above and beyond, you will want your own money. Make sure to bring enough cash to convert at the airports (to Rand or Emalangeneni).
5. It's not guaranteed that you'll be able to get a bicycle, but if you want to get a quality one while here, you might want to have supplementary funds pre-budgeted. If you qualify, the PC allotment will let you get one, but it will not be high quality.
6. Some PCVs have decided to purchase additional data plans that allow for WiFi at site, but it is outside of the PC budget. If you think this is something that you will want to do, make sure to allocate personal funds ahead of time.
7. While some PCVs have used their personal funds during service, it is also very possible to budget and live within the means of the PCV budget/stipend. If you have a hard time with budgeting, download an app that can help you do so.