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Festival abroad? Have fun and stay safe

You've got tickets, chosen which artists you most want to see, planned your outfits, and packed the glitter – but international festivals can require a bit more planning, and the to-do list can vary depending on the country. We've created an easy guide for all those extra health and safety considerations, so you can get back to enjoying your hassle-free festival vibes as quickly as possible.

Preparing for a festival abroad

To fully relax and enjoy the moment, both [festivals](#) and [holidays](#) take some [forward planning](#). Combine them in a festival abroad, and the list of things to sort and consider grows. To make things easier, these are the essential things to sort before you travel that help protect your safety and wellbeing before the fun starts.

Before you travel checklist

- **Book travel insurance** – that covers yourself, as well as all planned activities and all your festival possessions and gadgets.
- **Check the COVID-19 travel advice for your destination** – including entry requirements and local laws and customs.
- **For UK to Europe travel, get a UK Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC)** – this grants you access to emergency healthcare in the EU for free or at a reduced cost.
- **Check you have all necessary vaccinations** – festivals are crowded places, and diseases like [measles](#), [mumps](#), and [rubella](#), protected by the [MMR jab](#), can spread quickly. [Check your destination](#) for any specific vaccinations they require or advise you to have.
- **Look out for disease outbreaks** – in the country or region you're visiting.

- **Back up your documents online** – festival camping and drinking can mean any paper documents like tickets and passports can be all too easily lost or stolen. Make sure you keep [digital copies](#).

How to survive a festival abroad

Packing for a festival that involves a flight is very different than going by car, where you can fill your vehicle to the brim with camping equipment, food, drink, and any luxuries you desire to bring. This festival abroad packing list is designed to keep you as safe and well as possible while saving you valuable space.

What to take to a festival abroad

1. Preventing illness and injury management

- **Hygiene essentials** – baby wipes and hand sanitiser can protect against the spread of germs and disease in mass gatherings, and they're also important if you're camping with no access to showers.
- **First aid kit and medicine** – including any regular medicines you take, minor injury treatments, pain relief, insect repellent, blister plasters, sanitary products, and condoms to protect against **STIs** if having sex with someone new is a possibility.
- **Head lamp** – to help you find your tent in the dark without tripping and injury.
- **String** – is cheap and can serve multiple purposes, including hanging out wet clothes to dry, repairing things that break, and tying parts of a damaged tent together.

2. Sleeping well

- **Waterproof tent** – preferable to water resistant which isn't as good at stopping leaks. If you're using an old tent, seam sealer can provide extra water protection. Remember, even hotter climate countries can experience rain.
- **Lightweight/small sleeping equipment** – travel friendly sleeping bags, mattress pads, and inflatable pillows can roll up small but protect you from the aches and pains that come with ground sleeping. If you're a light sleeper, ear plugs and eye masks can help you get an undisturbed night's rest by blocking out festival noise and lights.

3. Staying energised, hydrated, and nourished

- **Healthy energy snacks** – nut, fruit, and seed-based **snacks** give a nutritious, long-lasting energy boost to support your festival activities.

- **Reusable water bottle** – it's essential to **stay hydrated in a crowded space**, especially in the heat. Choose one with a hook that can easily attach to your backpack for travelling, or your day bag or money belt for when you're dancing or deep in the crowds.
- **Rehydration treatments** – powders, tablets, or liquids designed to restore essential minerals and salts lost when you spend a lot of time in the heat or drinking alcohol.

4. Avoiding weather damage

- **In hot weather** – guard against **heat exhaustion, heatstroke**, and protect your skin from **sunburn**, premature **ageing**, and **cancer** with lightweight cover ups, sunhats, and **suncream with a minimum 30 SPF**.
- **In cool weather and at night** – if your festival is somewhere cold, bring layers of insulating clothing. Some festival locations may be hot in the day but cool at night, so be sure to check ahead.
- **In bright weather** – bring **sunglasses with a good UV protection rating**.
- **In wet weather** – raincoats, wellies, and rainproof hats can stop rain from soaking your inner clothes, putting you at risk of catching a cold.

5. Protecting against loss or theft

- **Passport and digital documents** – where you can, avoid paper copies of flight and festival tickets, and any other important documents.
- **Waterproof wallet** – to protect things that can't be digitally stored, like your passport and emergency cash.
- **Two combination locks** – to lock your tent and backpack when you leave them unattended. While thieves can still slash these open, locks are an extra deterrent which can make them try elsewhere.
- **Money belt** – cards, money, and passports may be safer to keep on your body, and money belts also mean your hands are free for waving, dancing, eating, or drinking.

Your festival abroad and risk of...

COVID-19

The days of lockdowns may be over, but [COVID-19](#) is still circulating worldwide, and different countries have different approaches to keeping it under control.

Before your trip, check what the COVID-19 entry requirements and local rules are, including whether you need proof of a negative test, proof of [vaccination and boosters](#), and face coverings in that region. Certain festivals may have their own rules to help lower the risk of COVID-19 spreading through crowds, so check before you attend.

Once there, practise good hygiene as much as you can and [wash your hands](#) regularly. It's common for festivals to run out of hand wash, so keep hand sanitiser on you in a pocket or money belt. If you experience possible symptoms while you're there, locate the nearest medical tent and follow the medical expert's advice. They may have instant COVID-19 tests on hand.

Measles

[Measles](#) is a highly contagious viral disease that can cause unpleasant rashes, high temperatures, and cold-like symptoms - and sometimes it leads to serious complications. Although the [MMR vaccine](#) keeps measles very low risk in UK mass gatherings, the chances of it spreading are higher in several other countries.

You can look for outbreaks of measles and how high risk your destination is [here](#). If you're unsure if you've had two doses of the MMR vaccine, check with your GP before you travel.

Mpox

In July 2022, a global [mpox](#) (formally known as monkeypox) outbreak was declared. This virus - which can cause aches and pains, a high temperature, chills, a rash, and serious complications - [remains present](#) in many countries, and is spread mainly by infected rodents. While mpox doesn't spread very easily between people, it's possible to get it through close contact with an infected person.

If before you travel you experience mpox symptoms and suspect you have it, the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) advises avoiding international travel. If you're in a group that's more vulnerable to mpox and have had your first vaccination dose, you must get your second by the end of July 2023.

At a festival abroad, you can reduce your chances of exposure by practicing [safer sex](#), and avoiding close contact with someone who is unwell or might have the mpox rash - including not touching their clothes, towels, or bedding.

Malaria

[Malaria](#) is a serious and potentially life-threatening infection that's spread by bites from female mosquitoes. Symptoms, which can be flu-like, can quickly become severe and you must seek urgent medical attention if you become unwell during or after a visit to a high-risk country - some types of malaria can develop months after you return home.

First, [find out](#) if your festival is somewhere high risk as soon as possible. If yes, there's no vaccination against malaria, but there are medicines you can take in the form of tablets. Ideally 6-8 weeks before the event, book a travel health risk assessment with your GP, who can speak to you about the benefits and side-effects of these [antimalarial tablets](#) and prescribe them.

It's always a good plan to [protect yourself from bites](#) at a summer festival. Mosquitoes that carry this disease typically bite after sunset, so if you're staying in a tent choose one with a second protective cover that keeps insects out, or if you've booked accommodation, make sure there's a mosquito net over the bed.

Dengue fever

Dengue is another viral infection that's spread through mosquito bites. It causes a flu-like illness, with symptoms such as fever, muscle aches, joint pains, and headache.

There's no vaccine against dengue if your travelling somewhere [high-risk](#). Instead, you need to minimise your chances of getting bitten as much as possible, particularly between dawn and dusk when mosquitos that carry dengue tend to bite:

- Cover your skin with long, loose fitting clothing.
- Apply insect repellent to any exposed skin, and reapply as often as the label instructions.

If you experience any feverish illness while abroad or when you get home, you must seek medical attention.

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