The seaside holiday checklist

Sun, sea, long flights and the small things that spoil a beach day

For a beach week in Europe or further away, or a day on the coast at home. Every official link is listed at the end. Tick the boxes as you go.

The 3 things that can end a trip before it starts

- ☐ Your passport and entry rules: find your line in the next section.
- ☐ Travel insurance that covers medical treatment abroad and the activities you plan: some policies exclude water sports.
- ☐ Your medicines: anything on prescription, in its original packaging, with a copy of the prescription, in your hand luggage.

Passports and entry rules: find your line

Going to the EU (most of Europe, the Schengen area):

- **UK, US, Canadian or Australian passport:** it must have been issued less than 10 years before the day you arrive, and be valid at least 3 months after the day you leave. You can stay up to 90 days in any 180. The first time you arrive you give fingerprints and a photo at the border (EES). Check whether ETIAS has started: it is expected from late 2026, costs €20, and must only be bought on the official EU website.
- **EU passport or national ID card:** your ID card is usually enough to travel within the EU. EES and ETIAS do not apply to you.

Going to the UK:

- **EU, US, Canadian or Australian passport:** you need a UK Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) before you travel, one per person including children. It costs £20, lasts 2 years or until your passport expires, and must only be bought on gov.uk or the official UK ETA app. Since 25 February 2026 you can be refused boarding without one.
- **EU citizens:** you need a passport to enter the UK. National ID cards have not been accepted for most visitors since October 2021.
- **UK and Irish passports:** no ETA needed.

Going further than Europe:

- **Everyone:** check the entry rules for that country on your own government's travel advice (links at the end), and how long your passport must still be valid. Some countries ask for 6 months.

Do you need a visa or an online permit before you fly?

Many beach countries let you in with just your passport, but some need something done online first, and a few ask for a form or a tourist tax as well. Examples for UK, EU, US, Canadian and Australian passports, checked in October 2026. Rules change, so always check your own government's advice before you book, and use only the official government website: look-alike sites charge extra.

- **No visa for a short holiday:** Europe, Turkey, Morocco, the UAE (Dubai), Mexico and most Caribbean islands.
- **USA:** UK, EU and Australian passports need an ESTA online before you fly. Canadians do not.
- **India:** an e-Visa for all 5 passports, applied for online before you travel.
- **Egypt:** an e-visa online or a visa on arrival ($30, cash). Short stays in the Sinai resorts (Sharm el-Sheikh, Dahab) get a free entry stamp instead.

- **Vietnam:** UK passports and many EU ones (Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Poland, the Netherlands, the Nordic countries) get up to 45 days without a visa. US, Canadian and Australian passports need an e-visa.
- **Bali (Indonesia):** a visa on arrival or e-VOA online for most passports, plus the free All Indonesia arrival card in the 3 days before you land, and the Bali tourist levy.
- **Thailand:** no visa for these passports, but fill in the online Thailand Digital Arrival Card (TDAC) before you land. The visa-free stay is being shortened, so check how long you can stay.
- **Maldives:** a free visa on arrival, plus the online traveller declaration (IMUGA) in the 4 days before you fly.

Health cover, by passport

- **UK:** carry your GHIC in the EU. It covers state treatment, not everything, so buy travel insurance as well.
- **EU:** carry your EHIC. It works across the EU and also in the UK, for state treatment.
- **Australia:** Australia has reciprocal health agreements with the UK and some European countries, for limited state treatment. Check the list before you go.
- **US and Canada:** there is no reciprocal cover in Europe or the UK. Make sure your insurance covers medical treatment abroad.
- **Everyone:** travel insurance that covers medical treatment, bought before you go, with a printed copy in your bag.

Phone, money and plugs

- Phone: EU plans roam at home prices within the EU. UK, US, Canadian and Australian plans usually charge abroad: check, buy an add-on, or use an eSIM.
- Money: when a card machine or cash machine offers to charge you in your home currency, choose the local currency. The home-currency option uses the machine's own exchange rate.
- Plugs: travellers really need 3 adapters. UK 3 square pins (type G); European 2 round pins (types C, E, F), which fits all of mainland Europe; US 2 flat pins (types A, B). Australia uses its own slanted pins (type I), so Australians need an adapter everywhere in this list. See the table for your destination.
- Voltage: Europe and the UK run at 230V. If you are coming from the US or Canada, check your chargers say 100–240V before you plug them in.

Plugs for popular summer holidays

Adapter to pack	Where it works
European 2 round pins (types C, E, F), 220–230V	Spain (with the Balearics and the Canary Islands), Portugal (with Madeira), France, Italy, Greece, Croatia, Turkey, Egypt, Morocco, Bali (Indonesia). India: a slim 2-pin plug fits most sockets.
US 2 flat pins (types A, B), 110–127V	Mexico, USA (Florida), most Caribbean islands (Bahamas, Jamaica, Dominican Republic, Barbados)
US 2 flat pins (types A, B), 220V	Thailand, the Philippines, Vietnam. Sockets here usually take European round pins too.
UK 3 square pins (type G), 230–240V	UK seaside, Malta, Cyprus, UAE (Dubai, Abu Dhabi), the Maldives (most resorts, check yours), St Lucia, Grenada

- Going somewhere with lower voltage (Mexico, the US, most of the Caribbean)? Phone and laptop chargers marked 100–240V work fine. Check hairdryers and straighteners before you pack them.

- Caribbean islands differ: most use US flat pins, a few former British islands use the UK 3-pin, and the French islands (Martinique, Guadeloupe) use European round pins. Check your island before you go.

One adapter for everything

- An adapter only changes the shape of the pins, not the voltage. The same US flat-pin adapter works at 110V and at 220V, so you never need two of one kind.
- Choose one rated 250V and 10A or more. It is safe at the lower voltages too.
- What matters is your device. Look at the small print on the charger: "100–240V" works everywhere with just an adapter. Most phone, laptop, camera and toothbrush chargers say this.
- Hairdryers, straighteners and curlers are often 220–240V only. They will run weakly or not at all at 110–127V. Pack a dual-voltage travel one, or use the hotel's.
- Easiest of all: 1 universal travel adapter with UK, European, US and Australian pins and 2 or 3 USB ports, so it charges your phone, watch and power bank at once.
- Pick one with slim round pins, so it also fits the recessed sockets in Switzerland and Italy, and buy a known brand with a UKCA or CE mark. Cheap unbranded adapters can overheat.
- A short extension lead or multi-plug from home means 1 adapter powers all your chargers.

Before you book

- [ ] Check whether you need a visa or an online permit, for every passport in your group: see "Passports and entry rules".
- [ ] Look at a map of where the beach actually is: "near the beach" can mean a road and a 20-minute walk away.
- [ ] Vaccines: check what is recommended for your country on TravelHealthPro (or your own country's travel health advice), and see your GP or a travel clinic at least 4–6 weeks before you go, as the NHS advises. Earlier is better: some vaccines need 2 or 3 doses spread over weeks, and some give long-term protection only with a booster months later.
- [ ] In the tropics, check whether your dates fall in the storm season.

The week before

- [ ] Phone plan checked, or an add-on or eSIM bought.
- [ ] A card with no foreign fees, plus some cash: beach parking, kiosks and sunbed hire are often cash only.
- [ ] The chargers check: the right travel adapter, the CABLE for every device, and a power bank.
- [ ] A photo of your passport and insurance policy saved on your phone and emailed to yourself.
- [ ] And a PRINTED copy of your insurance policy and its emergency number in your bag. No signal, no affordable data, no wifi or a flat battery always happens at the worst moment.
- [ ] Your own medical box: everyday basics (painkillers, plasters, something for an upset stomach) plus any prescription medicines, in their original packaging, with a copy of the prescription.
- [ ] Antihistamine (allergy) tablets in your handbag, not your suitcase. A new food, a new drink, even a new hand cream abroad can cause a reaction you have never had at home. Swelling of the face, lips or throat, or any trouble breathing, is an emergency: call the local emergency number (112 across Europe, 999 or 112 in the UK; look up the number anywhere else before you go).
- [ ] After-bite cream for mosquito, insect and fly bites.
- [ ] Electrolyte sachets: in the heat you sweat out salts as well as water.

For a long flight

- [ ] Loose, comfortable clothes and layers: planes get cold, the arrival will not be.
- [ ] A neck pillow, and a foot rest or footrest hammock that hooks over the tray table.
- [ ] Eye mask and earplugs.
- [ ] An empty water bottle to fill after security, and a few snacks.
- [ ] A toothbrush, your medicines and one change of clothes in your hand luggage, in case your suitcase arrives a day later.
- [ ] Get up and walk about every couple of hours, and drink water. If you are at higher risk of blood clots, ask your GP about flight socks.
- [ ] A pen, in case you need to fill in a landing form on the plane.

What to pack

- [ ] Sun cream of SPF 30 or more, with high UVA protection, and plenty of it.
- [ ] After-sun.
- [ ] Sunglasses and a hat with a brim.
- [ ] A small sun cream stick for your face, ears and scalp, essential if your hair no longer covers the top of your head.
- [ ] Swimwear, and a cover-up for walking into town: some towns expect you to cover up away from the beach.
- [ ] A quick-dry towel, or a beach towel if your hotel does not lend them.
- [ ] Water shoes, if the beach is pebbles or rocks.
- [ ] A refillable water bottle.
- [ ] Insect repellent for the evenings.
- [ ] A waterproof phone pouch, and a dry bag for keys and cards.
- [ ] A light jumper: seaside evenings get cool, even in summer.

On the beach

- Before you swim, find out where the lifeguards are and whether they are on duty that day and at that hour.
- Swim between the red and yellow flags. A red flag means do not go in. A black and white chequered flag marks the area for surfboards and kayaks, not swimmers. Flag systems outside the UK can differ, so ask.
- Never swim far out on a beach without lifeguards, and never when the tide is going out strongly.
- Check the tide times before you walk round a headland or out to rocks: the tide can cut you off.
- Stay in the shade between 11am and 3pm, and reapply sun cream after swimming and towelling dry.
- Drink more water than you think you need, and add electrolytes on hot days: you sweat out salts as well as water.
- Never leave phones and wallets on the towel while you swim.

Coming home

- Into Great Britain from the EU: no meat or dairy in your luggage, not even vacuum-packed from a shop. Sausage, ham and cheese stay behind. Chocolate, biscuits and sweets are fine.
- Into the US, Canada or Australia: food rules are strict. Declare any food you are carrying when you arrive; Australia in particular fines people who do not.

The night before

- [ ] Passport (or ID card, within the EU)
- [ ] Phone, plug AND cable
- [ ] Cards and a little local cash
- [ ] Your medical box, with allergy tablets in your handbag
- [ ] Printed insurance policy
- [ ] Your house keys

What we forgot

- Olesia: her charging cable, on 2 trips in a row. The right plugs, no cable. Ian always has a spare in his suitcase.

Useful links

Every official site mentioned in this checklist. Rules and fees change, so always check the official page before you travel.

What	Where
UK travellers: entry rules country by country	www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice
US travellers	travel.state.gov
Canadian travellers	travel.gc.ca
Australian travellers	www.smartraveller.gov.au
EU travellers	your own foreign ministry's travel advice
EES (fingerprints at the EU border) and ETIAS	travel-europe.europa.eu
UK ETA (visiting the UK)	www.gov.uk/eta
US ESTA (visiting the USA)	esta.cbp.dhs.gov
UK GHIC	www.gov.uk/global-health-insurance-card
EU EHIC	ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=559
Australia: reciprocal health care agreements	www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/reciprocal-health-care-agreements
Vaccines and travel health by country	travelhealthpro.org.uk
NHS travel vaccinations	www.nhs.uk/conditions/travel-vaccinations
Beach safety and flags (UK)	rnli.org
Bringing food into Great Britain	www.gov.uk/bringing-food-into-great-britain
Plug types by country	www.iec.ch/world-plugs

More trips, city guides and craft beer stops from Olesia and Ian at streetsandtaps.com. This checklist is general guidance, not legal or medical advice. Last checked: October 2026.