

# 8 Top Tips To Travel Packing And Luggage

## — Free Mini Guide

### 1. Buying The Best Luggage

Many factors go into your choice of luggage: sturdiness security, comfort, capacity, personal preference. Whatever you do, choose carefully and don't scrimp. Living out of a suitcase for months, you'll become acutely aware of its every shortcoming. It's worth spending twice as much to get exactly what you want.

Most long-term travelers settle on a single soft-sided "travel pack" made out of the heaviest possible nylon fabric, with either a shoulder strap, back and waist straps, or both. For independent travel outside the First World, leave your Rollaboard behind. Wheels are great on hard, smooth surfaces, but dead weight on your back everywhere else. You can get luggage with both wheels and backpack straps, but in most of the world streets and sidewalks (if there are sidewalks) are too rough for wheeled luggage to be useful.

To learn more about buying the best luggage, check out our full 223-page guide to packing and luggage. [Click here to discover more >>](#)

### 2. What Clothing to Bring

EDIT YOUR CLOTHING LIST: As you weigh these many factors, along with your daily itinerary, a clothing list will evolve. Study it carefully. Notice how many times you've listed a specific item—shorts, for instance, or T-shirts. Do you have shorts listed seven times for your seven-day trip? In that case, you'll probably be able to make do with only two or three pairs, as long as one is black, brown, or another color that doesn't show dirt. Have you listed your lime-green Manolo Blahnik pumps just once? Better to leave them at home in favor of a more versatile pair of shoes. Here, right here, is where your clothing editing begins, when you can consider all the variables calmly. It certainly beats gazing, panic-stricken, into the yawning mouth of your suitcase the evening before your 7 AM flight.

If you'll be traveling outside the United States, stay away from logo T-shirts, sneakers, baseball hats, and jogging suits, which immediately label you as an American, for better or for worse. On the other hand, if you're going to Walt Disney World or another theme park, wearing the logos of hometown teams and favorite companies can spark conversations with your fellow travelers, people who are waiting in the same lines that you are, when any conversation can make the time pass more quickly.

Pockets are always useful, but especially when you're traveling.

If you must indulge the occasional urge to bring something totally impractical, err on the side of the compact. Items that take little suitcase space but make a big statement are definitely worth their weight. Toss in a silky sleeveless knit top or scarf with a bit of shine and you can instantly glamorize the dark skirt or trousers you wore for sightseeing all day.

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### **3. Know Your Baggage Limitations Before You Travel**

**BAGGAGE RULES OF THUMB:** In the United States, most airlines allow passengers to check two pieces of luggage and to carry on one additional bag, which must fit either into the overhead bin or underneath the seat in front of you, plus a personal item such as a briefcase, handbag, or diaper bag. Many carriers limit the dimensions of your primary carry-on to a total of no more than 45 inches—that is, 22 x 14 x 9, for example, or 20 x 16 x 9. The limit on your second carry-on is less a matter of size than of perception. It must look like a personal accessory such as a purse, briefcase, small knapsack, or diaper bag. The standard is subjective, however, so if you can fit one item into another—say, cram your handbag into your briefcase or your briefcase into a shopping bag—then go for it.

Each checked item must weigh no more than 50 pounds, and the height, width, and length of each must total no more than 62" or you may be charged a fee, which ranges from \$50 to \$150 per overlimit bag. Weight and size limits also apply to international flights that arrive in or depart from the United States.

**COMMON EXCEPTIONS:** Between international destinations, weight limits are sometimes more restrictive. For instance, in many non-U.S. airlines, you are permitted to check no more than 44 pounds in coach, or 66 pounds if you're traveling in first class. For anything over that amount, you are asked to pay a surcharge—usually a charge per additional pound. (If you are carrying more than that, be prepared for a shock. It could cost you several hundred dollars.) If you are flying on a regional jet or other small plane, still other limits may apply. On small jets, you usually have to check small roller suitcases and garment bags at the gate and can bring only personal items on board. In other cases you may be weighed along with all your bags to make sure the plane isn't overloaded.

To learn more about what you can take, check out our full 223-page guide to packing and luggage. [Click here to discover more >>](#)

### **4. How To Carry Your Personal Documents**

Maintain a pouch or envelope for miscellaneous travel documents, including any leftover traveler's checks from previous trips, copies of prescriptions for medications and eyeglasses, key medical information, a list of your frequent-flier and frequent-guest numbers, and your credit-card account numbers and their emergency refund telephone numbers for your destination, as well as phone, fax, and cell phone numbers and snail-mail and e-mail addresses for all the key people in your life. (This would include family members, neighbors, your doctor, your lawyer, associates at work, and your travel agent; if he or she also has a 24-hour help line, include that as well.)

*TIP: If you were ticketed using your spouse's last name but your ID remains in your maiden name, bring your marriage license to back up your explanation.*

Add to this a copy of your insurance card, with your group and individual ID numbers and the company's phone and fax numbers. Include a photocopy of the first page of your passport. Some overseas-bound business travelers carry extra passport photos plus two official copies of their birth certificate. With these, another official passport can be issued in the event of loss or theft of the original, rather than just a temporary replacement.

Add your swatches and measurements cards—friends' sizes and measurements, hometown prices on things

you want to buy, swatches of fabric of clothing or home furnishings you'd like to match, and paint chips.

Take a picture of your luggage and add that.

If you don't have all these documents on hand, get out your address book, stop by a photocopier, and put it all together now, whether or not you've got a trip in the offing. Even if you never get robbed or fall ill in a foreign country, being prepared is worth it for the peace of mind alone. Keep the envelope in your luggage. Give copies of all the important papers in your documents kit to a friend at home; you can also send the typed-up information in an e-mail to yourself that you can access on the road if need be.

Finally, make sure that your photo ID matches the name that's on your ticket or e-ticket confirmation.

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## **5.How To Avoid Creases**

No matter what kind of luggage you use, the time eventually comes when you'll need to fold something—perhaps even the dreaded long-sleeve Oxford-cloth shirt. Using a few tried-and-true methods, you can keep wrinkling to a minimum. If you're really compulsive or if looking wrinkle-free matters, you will button everything around an empty plastic dry-cleaning bag (you can even thread these long plastic bags through the sleeves) and then put a plastic bag on top of the garment before you fold it.

*TIP: Try to unpack as completely as possible as soon as possible so your clothing has a chance to breathe and wrinkles can fall out naturally. Let's say that you plan to change hotels every night for six nights and are using a garment bag. The minute you get to the room, remove only what you need for the evening and the following morning. Even this small amount of breathing room will cut down on last-minute pressing.*

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## **6.Know Your Responsibilities**

If you are changing planes en route, make sure your bag will be checked through to your final destination. Ask about any unusual procedures. For example, if you are preclearing U.S. Customs at your connecting airport—say, on a Vancouver-Toronto-New York routing—you'd clear customs in Toronto, and you might need to reclaim your bag in Toronto, take care of the formalities, and then recheck the bag.

Finally, remove straps and hooks. These can get caught in baggage-processing machinery.

*TIP: It used to be permissible to carry on all kinds of large objects: portable cribs, big backpacks, golf bags, skis, skateboards, snowboards, and musical instruments. You still can carry aboard many of these items, but you must check with the airline in advance if you plan to do so. Most airlines let you bring aboard an item if it meets the same size restrictions imposed on other carry-ons. If you do not want to check a fragile or valuable item, say, a cello or other unwieldy object, many airlines permit you to buy an extra ticket and place it on the seat next to you. The protocol for checking sports gear—whether it's a bicycle, bowling ball, set of golf clubs, fishing pole, skis, or a snowboard—differs from one airline to the next, so check in advance and*

*plan to ship the stuff if you have to.*

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## **7. Use Your Packing List So You Don't Leave Things Behind**

Here's hoping you followed the advice in Chapters 2 and 3 to write down your packing list and keep a copy. (And you did remember to cross off all those items you wisely decided at the last minute to leave at home, didn't you?) If you did, repacking should be a no-sweat process. By checking each item off the list as it is packed, you reduce the risk of leaving your favorite black all-season trousers behind.

This is especially useful if you've been staying in one place for a number of days—getting settled usually involves dispersing your belongings in various drawers and closets. And if you're traveling with a family, you can't count on your memory to make sure you've retrieved every little car and animal from under the beds, let alone make sure your child's beloved stuffed friend isn't hidden among the blankets.

Even if you've been changing hotels daily, virtually living out of your suitcase, double-checking the list is a good way to streamline the constant packing.

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## **8. Rules For Over-Sized Baggage**

Unlike weight limits, size limits vary from airline to airline. It is irrelevant to Airline J whether Airline K accepted something or charged extra for it on some other flight. If you have or expect to have anything larger than an ordinary suitcase, call each and every airline on which you plan to travel, in advance, to find out whether it will accept it and, if so, how much it will charge.

Rules for oversize baggage (e.g., surfboards, bicycles, and skis) vary greatly from airline to airline. Most airlines have set fees for specific items of this sort. Check with each airline on which you are booked for its fees (some carry surfboards for free, some charge US\$150 per board per flight) and regulations. Does it require bicycles to be dismantled and/or boxed? Does it provide the boxes, or must you have your own? Does it require oversize baggage to be checked in early? How early? If you will be changing planes, find out if you will be charged additionally for each flight, or only once for the entire through journey.

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