

# Bright Ideas



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## Packing 101

### *How to go anywhere with only what you can carry*

In the spring, a man—or woman’s—fancy turns to thoughts of summer vacation. For many of us, it also turns to out-of-town conferences or meetings. What all those trips have in common is the need to pack just the right things.

In these days of checked bag fees and smaller car trunks, traveling light makes sense for so many reasons.

As Doug Dymant of onebag.com says,

“In the real world there are two kinds of luggage: carry-on and lost.” Anyone who knows me well is aware that I am obsessed with packing light. Here are my secrets for packing for any trip with carry-on only.

#### **The Right Bag**

For longer trips of 1 week or more, my main bag is a backpack on wheels. It’s sized to fit in the overhead compartment of a plane, once my noise-cancelling earphones are removed. Most times I wheel it through airports and down streets with ease. On rough surfaces, like cobblestone streets, I fold the built-in flap over the wheels to protect my clothes and wear it on my back. When buying this type of bag, make sure the compartments open wide enough for packing and

their organization feels intuitive to you. Otherwise, you’ll have to tear the bag apart any time you want to find something. For smaller trips I use a smaller backpack with fewer compartments.

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My “personal item” is usually a [Lowepro](#) “sling-shot” camera bag or, for conferences and business trips, a soft-sided briefcase for papers and electronics. While the sling bag is usually on my back in airports and hotel lobbies, it easily slides around to rest on my lap on tour buses and hotel shuttles. It has lots of flexibly-sized compartments (what did we do before Velcro?) for filters, lenses, binoculars, birding guide and spare underwear or small souvenirs.

#### **What to Pack**

What you pack is determined in part by how long you will be gone, the predicted weather and planned activities. Beyond that, a few basic principles always apply:

- **Clothes must mix-and-match to form multiple outfits.** Each major clothing item you pack should work with at least two others. The exception to this rule is a tuxedo on cruises with multiple formal nights, in which case (if you own one) you will get more than one night’s wear out of it on its own.

- **Favour shirts or tops with patterns.** As a member of the sloppy eater’s club, the combination of a patterned shirt and a Tide pen has kept me presentable on more than one trip.
- **Wear your heavier items rather than pack them.** A sweater or jacket takes up a lot of space in luggage. If it gets too warm, you can take it off in the car or plane. I always wear my walking shoes and pack the sandals and/or dress shoes, if a second pair of shoes is required. The exception to this rule involves hiking boots when flying, because getting them off and back on at security is a pain.
- **Reduce liquids and gels to a minimum.** With rare exceptions, shampoo and soap will be provided. I pack mini-sized toothpaste

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and deodorant. Look for packs of individual wipes impregnated with sunscreen or insect repellent. [Magellan's](#) has useful dry items like laundry soap leaves, shaving cream leaves, and socks with built-in insect repellent.

Various companies have clothing designed for travelers. [Tilley](#) hats are impervious to rain, good for mopping sweat from brows and stiff enough to make good fans. Jackets that convert to vests and slacks that convert to shorts are good for leisure travel, although the latter look too casual on business trips. Tilley socks and underwear hand-wash and wring dry so well, they could be worn immediately if necessary. Four pairs of underwear is my maximum regardless of the length of the trip.

For short trips (2-3 days), I pack one top and, depending on the need to add a dressier or more casual option, a jacket or sweater and dress slacks or jeans. Sometimes I add a pair of shoes.

For longer trips, I pack 3 – 5 tops, including a shirt that can be worn as either a blouse or a jacket. Long trips also involve packing two “bottoms” (e.g., slacks, skirts, shorts) and an additional pair of

shoes. Tops are either long- or short-sleeved, depending on the season/climate. If rain is expected, I pack a compact umbrella or plastic hooded poncho. Unless traveling to the tropics in summer, I take gloves.

Cruises with formal nights require adding a suit for men and, for women, two glitzy tops, a long skirt or black dress pants and dress shoes. A light robe or beach cover-up and swimwear are also needed. I carry my own snorkel gear because I have prescription goggles and an extra-small mouthpiece. However, most snorkel trips include all the equipment you'll need.

### How to Pack

Make a list of what you plan to take. If a major clothing item is not part of at least two “outfits,” cross it off the list. The final itemized list ensures nothing is forgotten when packing time is short.

My packing secret is nesting. I nest underwear and other small items inside shoes and nest dress shoes inside sandals. (I also nest my shoes inside my husband's shoes.) Shirts and jackets are laid out flat and wrinkle-free on the bed, one on top of the other. Then slacks and knit tops are laid in a line down the middle of the shirts. Sleeves

and edges are folded around these items to avoid hard creases. The pant bottoms are folded up to the level of the shirt bottoms and then folded up twice more.

For longer trips where more clothes are involved, I make several clothing bundles with each one including a complete outfit. On trips with multiple hotels, I can pull out a single bundle at each stop, which reduces re-packing time.

If flying, toiletries are packed in two bags; one with just liquids and gels, the other with everything else. The bag with liquids goes at the outer edge of the suitcase where the zippers meet, so it can be removed and re-stowed easily at security. Additional resealable bags pack flat and keep wet clothing and breakable souvenirs from turning your belongings into a disaster.

Finally, speaking of souvenirs, a hand-held digital scale helps ensure that luggage meets any weight restrictions on the way home.

### Check This Out

[One Bag: The Art & Science of Traveling Light](#)

[Bundle Packing - You Tube](#)

[Women's Business Trip - You Tube](#)

*From Where I Sit*



## And now for something completely different

*Is that all you've got?* These words are not something I want to hear applied to my talents as a consultant; and fortunately I never have. But I have heard them many times regarding my ability to travel light.

Being well-organized as a consultant and as a traveler share many skills. Both involve good planning, a clear eye and objectivity. Trav-

eling light does not mean doing without the things you need. But it does mean planning ahead so you can predict what you will need and have it to hand when required. And much as an item or tool may be loved, if it isn't the best choice for the destination or client, it's out.

I started traveling by schlepping three pieces of matched luggage through Europe. Experience has taught me much since then about traveling light and smart.



*K. K. Biersdorff Consulting supports organizational excellence and innovation through an array of planning, research, communication and training services that take projects seamlessly from start to finish.*