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Travelling light in great style

Tips from the experts

Travelling

LIGHT

Tips from an expert

By Ruby Boukabou

I've always enjoyed the idea of travelling light. Sometimes I've managed to an extent, but it seems that lately my bags are bulkier, heavier and more cumbersome than ever with those what-if dresses, books, magazines and all sorts of tech paraphernalia. "Well you do have seven kilos of shoes here," my friend stated before my last trip to Egypt, holding the bag of them up with his portable scales. Determined to pack lighter for my next voyage, I contact an expert, my friend Elise McLeod.

Elise is an Australian writer and director for stage and screen, based in Paris. She has got the art of packing lightly down pat. Over the past 15 years she has travelled the continents with carry-on luggage only. And she's brimming with advice.

I Skype her at a good time. "I actually need to pack for a two-week journey to the south of France. I'll do it now," she says. She moves into her bedroom and flings open a small bag. "The main logic in my trips is that either I'm going somewhere warm and don't need many clothes, or somewhere cheap so I can buy things there, or to see friends or family who I can borrow things from."

That in mind, we start from the basics and work through her tips.

Number one rule: get a bag that is light

There are some very heavy bags out there and you can add or reduce kilos just with your choice of bag. Also, whatever bag you have, you will usually fill. So a smaller bag will encourage you to actually pack less.

Shoes

The biggest trap is shoes. You have to be conservative. In essence, pack one pair each of heels, flats and boots. You don't really need ballerina flats *and* slip-ons. Take whichever is more versatile.

Plan your outfits

Don't just throw anything in, in haphazard order. Work out, as much as you can, where you're going and actually plan what you'll wear for each occasion. For example, if you know you're going to one glitzy event, bring one glamorous outfit. Not three.

Outfits that mix and match

Lay everything out on your bed and look for items that can mix and match. Look at the colour palette and also think about colours that match the place you're going. If you're going to the south of France, take colourful outfits.

Take out the what-ifs

Only pack the clothes you really love. If you don't wear it at home, you're unlikely to wear it there. Don't pack two similar outfits.

Packing for the colder seasons

You only need one warm coat and one pair of boots. Pack cashmere instead of wool; it's warm and doesn't take up much space. Bring one jumper you love that goes with everything. Thermals are light and you can wear them while travelling. If you're travelling between seasons you can always layer up.

Head to the beauty salon before you go

Plan to polish, pluck, wax or whatever you do before you go so that you don't need to take those things with you. >>





Pack a silk scarf

Not only does it take up almost no room, it's also a good idea to sleep in if you're feeling slightly under the weather or cold from the air conditioning on the plane or train.

Combine toiletries, make-up and medicine

Use one small case for everything. Keep make up to a minimum: one mascara, a day and a night lipstick, eye shadow, moisturiser and wipes. Likewise, take minimal toiletries: small toothbrush and toothpaste, travel-size body wash and shampoo, and tampons. Take a tiny medical kit: a small bottle of tea tree oil for bites, tissues, a small container of pawpaw lotion. For anything like painkillers, just cut a few out of the packet and put them in a little bag.

Entertainment

Buy magazines on your way instead of packing them. Pack just one book. You can get other ones from book exchanges on your trip. Or use a Kindle, phone or computer to save space.

Keep gifts small or buy at the airport

It may seem tacky but people often actually love little token gifts like kangaroo keyrings that double as bottle openers. When you're waiting at the airport it's always worth buying a few trinkets like this that don't take up much space. Buy other presents like wine or perfume at the airport if you're seeing the people shortly after arriving.



Pack in advance

Pack two days in advance. Over-packing is often the result of panic in a last-minute rush. Packing in advance allows you to reconsider what you're taking and you can unpack some of the load.

The benefits of packing light

There's nothing like arriving in a country and being able to bypass all those people waiting at the carousels and head straight out on your adventure. You'll also avoid painful experiences on public transport or in places with lots of stairs like the metro stations in Paris. ♣



ELISE'S PACKING CHECKLIST

Small purse bag

(goes across shoulder or in handbag)

- passport
- keys
- wallet
- phone

Handbag

- notepad and mini pencil case
- sunglasses
- computer
- little bag with headphones and cables
- case with business cards
- earplugs and eye mask

Make-up/toiletries/medicine bag

- (in handbag)
- tea tree oil
 - pawpaw lotion
 - small sunscreen
 - make-up basics: mascara, lipstick, eye shadow, remover, moisturiser
 - small toothbrush and toothpaste
 - blister pads, taken out of packet
 - painkillers, taken out of packet
 - tampons/pads

Suitcase

- 1 pair of trousers (also wear one)
- 2 camisoles
- 3 dresses: 2 daytime, 1 night
- 3 pairs of shoes: heels, flats, and thongs or boots
- bathers
- 1 skirt
- 2 T-shirts: 1 black, 1coloured
- 1 long-sleeved shirt
- socks and underwear
- jacket (wear on journey)

HOW TO PACK

- Start with shoes. Don't put them in bags; that takes up too much space.
- Place little items in the gaps and socks inside the shoes.
- Roll everything else except for the dresses which go flat on the top.
- Pack things like underwear and skirts in small cloth or netting bags that can prevent you from sneaking in extra objects. They also transform into laundry bags.
- Wear your bulkiest items as you travel and your carrying weight will be immediately lighter.



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