



9 Packing Hacks That Will Revolutionize the Way You Travel

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It is a truth universally acknowledged that packing is a pain. No matter how much we travel, we agonize over what to bring and how best to maximize space in our luggage. Packing is especially frustrating because even if we want to pack light, we end up needing 12 different outfits each day ... and an equal number of shoes. On no other vacation, do you find yourself bringing over-the-door shoe bags, snorkel equipment, tuxedos, fleece jackets, highlighters and large floppy sun hats on the same trip. It's a packing nightmare.



While we likely can't convince you that you don't need the third ball gown or both pairs of sneakers, we can share some packing hacks that will help you solve common packing problems and use your suitcase space more efficiently. Everyday items -- including some you almost threw away -- can become packing saviors. Follow these tips and tricks to hack your way to efficient packing for your next trip.

KEEPING YOUR OUTFITS SORTED

Solution: Going on a trip requires so many types of clothing: daywear, formalwear, swimwear and even gymwear if you're inclined to work out. Keeping all of that sorted can be a nightmare. You could buy packing cubes ... or you could save those zippered plastic casings that sheet sets come in to serve the same purpose. (Ziploc bags work, as well.) Pair your outfits, put them in their own bags, and squeeze all the air out before you zip them closed. Not only will you be spared from hunting for that matching top, but you'll have an easier time fitting more clothes into the suitcase.

GETTING THE CREASES OUT

Solution: All that formal evening attire (and even some of your country club casual attire) is susceptible to wrinkles on the long trek between your house and your destination, especially if you've got a flight in between. Save the plastic bags you got after your last post-cruise trip to the dry cleaner, and carefully wrap wrinkle-prone clothes in them when you pack for your next sailing. Fold delicate items in tissue paper left over from the holidays. Your favorite fashions will remain wrinkle-free and safe.

TANGLED AND LOOSE JEWELRY

Solution: You take out your jewelry on the first formal night, and it's all tangled in one large, sparkly ball. With so many jewelry-separating packing hacks out there, you'll never have to spend time in your room untangling your necklaces or digging around at the bottom of your bag for the other earring. Earrings can be threaded through buttons or separated out in pill containers that have a compartment for each weekday. Keep thin necklaces from tangling by threading them through a cut-in-half drinking straw and then clasping them closed, or by taping them to an index card. Other tricks to keeping small pieces of jewelry separated include storing items in egg cartons, Altoid cases and Tik-Tak boxes.



WALLET DOESN'T FIT IN TRAVEL BAG

Solution: Your massive day-to-day wallet won't fit in your travel purse, and you're nervous about leaving credit cards behind in the room to make it slimmer. Instead, pare down your wallet before your travels. If you've ever traveled on a cruise line that gives out those pleather card holders to store your cruise card, save them, and use them as travel wallets on your next trip. They work well as business card holders, too, should you travel with your business card.

DIRTY SHOES

Solution: You'll likely be spending a lot of time exploring your new environs, whether it be by flip-flops on the beach or hiking boots near an Alaskan glacier. But how do you keep those dirty shoes from spilling sand and dirt onto your clothes on the return trip home? Next time you travel, take the shower cap sitting unused in your hotel bathroom. Then when you next pack after your trip (or really anytime you want to protect your clothing), wrap the shower cap around the soles of your shoes to keep dirt and sand away from your clothing. Plastic bags work well, too. (Or see our first hack. If your clothes are encased in plastic, they're safe from footprints.)

EXPLODING (OR LEAKING) LIQUIDS

Solution: You can easily hack your way to preventing liquid travel products from leaking. The easiest method is to cut a square of plastic wrap, place it over the open top of the bottle, then screw the cap on over the plastic square. Put some tape over the top to be safe and -- voila! -- spill-proof bottles. Or, if you don't need the whole bottle, decant your lotions and creams into smaller containers; think contact lens cases and pill bottles with childproof caps. You've then got a space-saving *and* spill-proof way of transporting toiletries. Another solution that does double duty is to storing your bottles in Tupperware. Once the containers have done their job keeping your clothes safe from spills, you can wash them out and use them to carry out food from the buffet.



FITTING (LOTS OF?) SHOES INTO LUGGAGE

Solution: Your shoes are now happily wrapped up, but they're bulky and take up so much room in your suitcase. There's no way to reduce shoe bulk (unless you only pack flip-flops or ballet flats), but you can put them to use. Fill that footwear with all the little items that clutter up your suitcase -- chargers, the magnets you're going to stick on the cabin walls, small toiletries, even socks, underwear or ties. The bigger your feet, the more space you have to fit loose items.

PACKING BULKY ITEMS

Solution: While we're talking about bulky items, a packing hassle for guys is what to do with collared shirts and belts that never want to pack nice and flat. Easy peasy -- roll the belt and stick it inside the shirt collar. You protect the shirt, save some room and can probably wad up some socks to fill out the remaining space inside.

KEEPING WINE SAFE

Solution: Packing a bottle in your checked bags means risking a messy break and spill. Our favorite bottle protection hack is to save up bubble wrap and then fashion a protective case for your bottle. We've also heard of inserting wine bottles in pool floaties and sneakers.

