

Luggage packing tips from Selwyn Ting, USC Professor:

Selwyn Ting's Luggage and travel recommendations:

After lots of traveling, lots of field trips, I decided that the way I travel works pretty well... good choices will make everything go more smoothly. Here is some insight into my logic --please read through: you may find it useful.

You will need an ensemble of different sized bags:

Prioritize items into a hierarchy of importance, usefulness, and scale. Consider what is essential or primary, then consider the secondary, and tertiary.

Primary

For me I think of the primary as what is on my person at all times: clothes I am wearing, essential documents when traveling this includes extra credit card hidden in my travel belt or neck pouch, cell phone w/ important phone numbers, and in my man-purse (seriously purse size -not messenger bag size otherwise you will need to check it at museums): sketch book and supplies, camera, compressible wind breaker (I find these the most space and weight efficient articles for provisional warmth), bottle of water, umbrella. If I lose everything else I can make it with what's on me.

During Travel:

Identify a secure and relatively accessible place that you will keep your travel documents, passport, and perhaps extra credit card. I have a belt pouch that is worn inside the pants. Others use an around-the-neck pouch/carrier. Be consistent in its use and you will always know where your important stuff is.

During Studies:

Sketch book bag - required, aka man-purse or murse: This item is important because we will visit and sketch in venues that do not allow daypacks - checking them in wastes huge amounts of time waiting in line and retrieving. I have a lightweight, small shoulder bag. It has just enough room for my digital camera, sketch book, light reading or guide book, small gear (pencils, tissues, etc.) I fit this in my backpack and it becomes the bag that I take to my seat on the airplane or train (backpack goes overhead-- more leg room) and it is the bag always with me on all excursions. Keep in mind that large bags of all types will need to be checked in at museums -- keep it compact and flat (brief case / messenger bag size is too big)!

I recommend an approximately 9 1/2" x 7" (unstuffed dimension) shoulder bag. The contents it should hold are water bottle, pencil box, sketchbook and assignments, map book (or cell phone with downloaded maps), food, warm hat, tissue, phone, camera, and maybe a small folding umbrella. When I use my 12 X 8 bag I can also fit my Gortex shell with room for a large potato or small puppy to spare.

Secondary

Small bag--a daypack is recommended: go lightweight. This will be for day trips and weekend trips -- I went in the 2000+ cubic inch range. compression straps, outside pocket for water bottle or wet umbrella is useful. This will be your carry-on for the trip over. Back packs with wheels are too heavy. My favorite was a cheap backpack I got free from joining the sierra club, it was super light, I could simply stuff it into larger luggage when not in use (good for field trips where you might come back with more than you left with).

Packables here include changes of clothes, especially socks (clean socks are critical) and underwear, laundry detergent in a ziplock bag (more on this below), laptop (sometimes), toiletry articles, chargers. This is everything else I need for up to twelve days of travel. This fits into an airplane carry-on size rolling luggage).

Tertiary (2 items):

Small wheeled luggage- airline carry-on size, great for extended trips. Do not bring your big suitcase on these trips, it won't all fit on the bus, it will be a pain on the train. This will be your second checked bag on your trip over. (Note from Kim: Vueling and most of the low cost airlines in Europe charge a fee for checking bags and only allow quite a small carry on, so you should review their requirements on their web sites.) Ideally this piece of luggage can be attached to your larger suitcase below.

One (and only one) medium or large suitcase with wheels --for your big move between continents. Keep in mind that you have to move all of your stuff yourself. The kind with an extending handle that can be dragged up curbs -- the upright rolling ones (4 wheels) work great on smooth surfaces, but not at all on cobblestone (go with two big wheels). Also the extending handle gives you a place to put your small bag... (Note: Also check weight limits for international travel for the airline you are flying and make sure your luggage is not too heavy)

Note on travel, clothes packed, and laundry. In the same volume as a shirt, you can carry enough dry concentrated detergent for two or three washings. I bring enough socks and underwear for only three, maybe four, days, I wash as I go along - this takes merely minutes as the articles are small. Buy quick drying items (usually synthetic - sporting goods stores such as REI and A-16 have reasonably presentable garments of all sorts designed to travel wash and dry well on the road). (They even have underwear that dry so quickly that you need only two pairs - wash and dry each night). Larger items are wash-as-needed. Get into a routine of timing washes so that things are dry when you checkout for your next leg of travel. All my clothes I like to think of as being presentable and neat, but that can be worn comfortably such as a casual blazer that I won't hesitate to stuff into a bag, yet one that I could still wear to a meeting.