

Travel Outlook

When travelling remember first things first

When you are making your travel plans, it's easy to overlook one important aspect: Your luggage.

Most of us don't realize - until the trip has begun, and it's too late - just how dependent we are on luggage.

Stylish suitcases, with designer's logos and other trendy ornamentations may impress people such as hotel porters - if that's an important consideration.

But remember to keep function ahead of form in your choice of luggage. If it doesn't stand up to travel, a suitcase can be the cause of a spoiled vacation.

An exaggeration? Not when you learn that a checked piece of luggage is handled - or mishandled - 10 times on the typical flight, from the time you entrust it to the ticket agent at the check-in counter until you spot it in the baggage-claim area at your destination.

Carriers and their baggage-handlers aren't necessarily insensitive to luggage. In loading it aboard an airplane, their policy is to put the strong luggage on the bottom - but in peak periods, when passenger loads are high and time is short, that policy is likely to be abandoned.

Essentially, your choice of a suitcase comes down to three types - hard, soft-sided, and soft.

HARD BAGS

A hard bag has a rigid frame, rigid sides, and comparatively heavy hinges and clasp. Normally it is made of metal or molded plastic.

Those who seek maximum protec-

tion, such as professional photographers and musicians, frequently buy an expensive type of suitcase made of the same kind of aluminum used in the construction of the airplane itself. Some of those silvery suitcases are even protected with a rubber bumper around the perimeter.



VINCENT EGAN

If you are a typical traveller, a hard bag will provide the best protection of the things you pack, because it can take the greatest amount of abuse. The offsetting disadvantage is that hard suitcases are heavy even when empty - and, obviously, much heavier when packed.

Many manufacturers have resorted to that basic invention, the wheel, to cope with the difficulty. But if you buy a suitcase with wheels - and their customary accessory, a pull strap - try to find one with wheels and strap that retract or are removable. Otherwise, the wheels could be broken off and the strap could catch on something such as a conveyor belt, in the course of the rough handling that the bag may undergo.

Look for a model that stays open easily while you are packing.

SOFT SIDES
A soft-sided bag is, of course, much lighter than a hard suitcase. Its frame is likely to be of a lighter material such as aluminum.

As for the choice of materials covering that light frame, the variety is wide. Least expensive is vinyl, but is highly vulnerable to the stresses that luggage inevitably encounters.

At the other end of the spectrum is cowhide. Leather can take punishment well, but not only is it relatively expensive but it is also the heaviest of all the soft coverings.

A big selling point in this type of luggage - besides its light weight - is its flexibility. There always seems to be room for one more item to be packed (provided that it isn't breakable).

The same can be said of the third category - soft bags. These, too, come in a range of soft materials,

from canvas to suede, but with no supporting frame.

They are the lightest bags of all, and some are cleverly designed so as to fold down into themselves - in which form they can be packed into the corner of a suitcase, to be pressed into action for the return trip when you are laden with purchases made on your journey.

Bear in mind, however, that airport conveyor belts tend to chew up soft bags the way dragons chew up innocent maidens. Nevertheless, they are cheap, light, and suitable for casual clothing.

ACCESSORIES

One of the most useful of all accessories - even if it is far from stylish - is a strong strap or belt to be fastened around a hard suitcase. Then if the bag should spring open, either because you have packed it too tightly or because of rough handling by others, the belt will keep

the contents intact. (It also helps you to spot your bag more easily, in a sea of luggage).

Another valuable accessory is a collapsible two-wheel pull-cart, which can be a blessing when you set out on one of those lengthy route marches after the taxi has dropped you at one end of a huge airport and your check-in desk is at the other. Never try to check a suitcase with a cart attached - collapse your cart and pack it inside the suitcase, or carry it with you aboard the airplane.

Let's end with the adage, "first things first. When you choose the luggage for your next trip, visualize yourself living out of that luggage for the next few weeks - and banish all thoughts about the admiring glances that it might attract.

Virginia beach popular ocean resort community

Summer comes a bit early to Virginia Beach, as does the summer beach vacation season. In fact, it starts here in the spring, when the warm weather arrives, and extends into fall, when the climate turns slightly cooler.

This popular oceanside resort city has numerous attributes that have made it a favorite vacation spot. First of all, of course, are the miles upon miles of clean sandy beaches along the sparkling surf of the Atlantic Ocean and Chesapeake Bay. But besides this essential ingredient, Virginia Beach offers plenty of diverse attractions, as well as excellent facilities and opportunities for outdoor activities.

There are many who swear by mid-summer as the ultimate time to get away to the beach. Others who prefer vacationing before the height of the season include those not bound by school schedules: retired people, singles and couples without children, or families with pre-school children. Any group, though, will enjoy its fill of fun here.

Virginia Beach does its best to make visitors feel welcome. To start things off right, a uniformed Courtesy Patrol is on hand in the oceanfront resort area, ready to aid tourists. Experienced lifeguards are on duty throughout the summer on various portions of the beach. The city also regularly provides free enter-

tainment for all ages.

Weekly events start in May, on the main stage in the Norwegian Lady Park at 25th Street and Oceanfront. In mid-June, free daily entertainment begins at that site, as well as at several other parks along the beach. In addition, strolling entertainers travel up and down the seaside boardwalk on weekends, and weekly fireworks are planned.

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