

TRY PACKING LIGHT

by Chase Binder

Bud and I were chatting about travel with some new Florida friends the other day and were totally amazed at how they pack for trips and tours. They never check luggage! They are big fans of Rick Steeves tours and head out for adventures with just a backpack each, even for trips of 28 days. In all our travels, we've only encountered one other couple with this approach—a very put-together Californian couple who were our table mates on a cruise down the Irrawaddy River in Myanmar. They were on their second month of international travel with just a carry-on each.

Jaw-dropping efficiency, and not something we have ever seriously contemplated despite the numerous advantages. The Californians pointed out that they never had lost luggage and (even better) were able to make quick connections and accept last-minute alternate flights with no wayward luggage issues at all—including an unexpected upgrade to first class seats on a flight from Bangkok to Tokyo.

This got me thinking about packing for an upcoming road trip through Scotland with a stopover in Iceland. True, it's a road trip, and our itinerary calls for very few flights (and all on a single carrier, Icelandair). We'll have a comfy van with plenty of room for luggage for the four of us, whether navigating the M3, the country lanes or the ferries to and from the Outer Hebrides islands. But we'll be exploring city life in Edinburgh and Glasgow as well as the more remote northern stretches of the Isles of Lewis and Harris. It will be the end of May and the first half of June, so weather will be unpredictable—except for the near certainty of cold rain and wind at least part of the time.

So... the ideal would be to think about efficiency and flexibility, but be prepared for being jostled in city streets, enjoying a night or two on the town, making sure our feet are always happy, and being confident



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of keeping warm and dry when we need to. All while trying not to look like American tourists.

Of course, much has been written (including by me) about what to pack and how to pack it, especially for European trips. Stay within one or two color families—black is always appropriate, and pick another compatible neutral like tan, white or gray. Everything should “go” with everything else. Dress up or down with a selection of colorful scarves (including a larger pashmina which can double as a blanket while flying) and lightweight costume jewelry. Think layers, and make sure that your sweaters, vests or fleeces fit under your windbreaker. Never, ever bring shoes that aren't comfortable—but pack moleskin just in case cobblestone streets or hiking the moors are a bit too much. Go for wrinkle-free fabric whenever possible—except, of course for jeans. I simply won't travel anywhere without my favorite pair of jeans.

No doubt you've heard all this before—Bud and I can certainly recite this in our sleep. But I got to wondering what might be new out there, especially for clothing that helps keep us (and our stuff) safe from pickpockets. I already have my travel pocketbook (a cross-body quilted bag by lug called Wings with an RFID compartment for ID and

credit cards, a water bottle holder, and insulated section for snacks, and enough space for my phone, tablet and much more—\$70 at www.luglife.com). It is teal, not black, so I know it's mine and it stands out against black backgrounds.

And just recently I found a company called Clothing Arts (www.clothingsarts.com) which produces travel clothing specifically designed to protect against pickpockets. The company was conceived in 2007 by a couple of guys travelling through Cambodia (right around the time Bud and I were there!). They wanted lightweight travel garments that would work for business and adventure and that also had a way to stymie the extremely skilled pickpockets of Southeast Asia. They started with pants and shirts for men and have expanded with several ingenious designs that rely on invisible zippers hidden within pockets, long seams and inside flaps. The fabric takes advantage of new technology for lightweight, breathable and slightly stretchy garments and I am especially taken with their jeans (\$124.95) and a very good-looking waterproof jacket (priced at \$380, but I bet you wouldn't ever regret it). They do have a few women's items (shirt, skirt, pants, dress) that look serviceable and get excellent reviews—just hoping they find a women's designer with as much flair as their men's designer!

You have options, of course. TravelSmith (www.travelsmith.com) has been around for decades and is constantly upgrading their travel gear and clothing. Columbia (www.columbia.com) is beginning to edge from strictly athletic, sports-oriented clothing to light-weight, comfortable designs that can work in urban settings. Sales at EMS (Fort Eddy Road in Concord) are a great place to shop for Columbia clothes. Last, don't forget Target. You might be surprised at the flexible, comfy designs they have.

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