



Where Is She Heading

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Packing – Part 2 – Luggage Styles!

As you remember from last month, packing involves several steps: what to take, style of luggage, and how to organize our stuff. For those of you over the age of 25, remember when packing was simple? Luggage was hard sided, came in only 4 sizes and 5 colors, didn't have wheels or straps, and you could check it for free at the airport. Oh, the good old days.

Now there are literally hundreds of different combinations of styles, shapes, materials, sizes, weight and with the rare exception, you have to pay to take it with you on the plane.

Today's savvy traveler spends as much time thinking about the style and configuration of the luggage as they do on what goes in it. Pairing the style of luggage with the type of project and location is important to make sure you have the best luggage for your destination without taking too much.

PROJECT AND DESTINATION RESEARCH – Research the country and your exact location to understand what to expect at your destination. For example, if you are going into the bush where roads are unpaved and there are no sidewalks, rolling luggage may not be advisable.

Accommodations – Will you be in rooms with locking doors or more casual accommodations? If you are carrying items that you want to conceal when you are working, you will want to pick a style that offers some security.

Email the volunteer agency you will work with to get some answers and ask to speak with a recently returned volunteer from your exact location to get a feel for what to expect.

My friend Rain recently returned for a multi-month trip around the world. She returned with this advice, “If you cannot run with all your luggage to catch a departing train or bus, you are carrying too much.” The same goes for being able to carry it independently over long distances and through multiple flights of stairs.

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LUGGAGE STYLE – Now that you know what to expect, what do you prefer to carry and use? Backpack, rolling hard case perhaps with 360 swivel wheels, soft-sided duffel, rolling convertible backpack, carryon, daypack, or toothbrush. As an example of the last option, Rolf Potts is going around the world with a cleverly designed vest and carrying minimal items (tooth brush and Ipod) and NO LUGGAGE!

WEIGHT – Weigh each piece you plan to take while empty to find its weight. Knowing the lowest weights allowed on ALL your connecting flights will let you know how much you can put in the luggage.

QUALITY & PRICE – Ranging in price from \$25 per piece to several hundreds, overall quality can count in various ways – Durability of hardware (handles, zippers and wheels), material integrity from stains, rips and tears, ability to secure, and structural support both for what is inside and for you. Once you know that style you like, consider buying one in at least the middle of the range. It is no economy if the bag falls apart during it's first trip.

CONVERTIBLE LUGGAGE – These rolling bags also have a backpack harness and may offer the greatest flexibility across different types of trips. Before you buy, look inside and compare the area of the packing compartment space. You may lose some space for the harness support mechanism. Always make sure that the backpack straps can be completely concealed to avoid damage by conveyors.

Next month, Packing Part 3 – How to Pack will discuss how to arrange what you decide to take on your volunteer trip.

Travel in Safety.

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