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6 Most Common Packing Mistakes People Make (and the Easy Fixes You'll Wish You Knew Sooner)

Some tips for your trips.

By [Erica Leigh](#) | Published on June 09, 2025



One of the most stressful parts of a [vacation](#) is the prep, and that includes the packing. Weather and plans can change last minute, but the stuff you take with you is all you'll have, so you really want to nail it, even with all of the uncertainty. This can lead us to overpack, stuffing our suitcases to the brim and crossing the 50-pound limit that many airlines have in place for checked luggage.

To avoid this, we asked travel experts to tell us the biggest packing errors they see people making and how we can avoid them.

Packing Too Many "What Ifs"

"One of the biggest mistakes I see travelers make is overpacking for the "what ifs" instead of what might actually be needed," says Katy Rockett, regional director of North America for [Explore Worldwide](#), a small group tour company. "Not only does it slow you down, but it can lead to added stress managing checked bags and excess baggage fees." Instead, she suggests packing versatile layers that will work for whatever activities you have planned and leaving it at that. Then, you'll have room to bring back souvenirs!

Bringing Your Brand New Shoes

It's tempting to buy all new stuff for your vacation. After all, you're treating yourself to a trip so you may as well keep treating yourself. But, if you're not a fan of blisters (and who is?) you might want to think twice. "It's easy to forget how much walking happens day to day on trips, especially adventure-focused trips. Packing brand new or [uncomfortable shoes](#) can be a major misstep," Rockett says. "I always recommend bringing at least one pair of well-worn walking shoes, even on more relaxed itineraries. Your feet will thank you."

Forgetting About Dirty Laundry

You don't want to mix your clean, unworn stuff in with your sweaty duds! "I bring a cloth laundry bag to put dirty laundry in," says Matt Mazanec, tour director manager at [Tauck](#). "It keeps them separate, and if I am bringing home something fragile, I can wrap it in my dirty laundry for extra cushioning."

Packing an Iron or Steamer

This one may seem counterintuitive, but irons and steamers take up a ton of room, and if you're trying to bring only a carry-on, you likely won't have space for these appliances. Diana Ferro-Rodrigues, vice president at [Perillo Tours](#), recommends an easy alternative. "Instead, roll your clothes and pack a wrinkle release spray," she says.

Using Vacuum Seal Bags

Yes, these save a ton of room in your bag, but what many people don't realize is that they don't make your bag weigh less. "Your bag ends up weighing a ton, and you end up not being able to fit everything in your bag after you open the vacuum bags," Mazanec says. "Instead, use packing cubes and thoughtfully plan outfits with versatile pieces so that you're prepared for many situations."

Relying Too Heavily on Converters

Yes, you should *definitely* have these! But, converters tend to work better for smaller things like phone and computer chargers and not as well for items that take tons of power like a [blowdryer](#) or straightener. Consider buying inexpensive local appliances instead. "For example, why risk burning out your nice U.S. curling iron or flat iron when you could buy one in Europe and just let it live in your suitcase, removing all worry from the equation?" says Brenna Shay, tour director manager at Tauck.

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