



Packing the perfect carry-on bag

by *Christine Sarkis*, SmarterTravel.com Staff - February 13, 2008

Carry-on bags function as purses, totes, entertainment centers, and more. How do you fit all that stuff and keep it organized and accessible? Erika Salloux, professional organizer, expert packer, and owner of [Living Harmony](#), a Boston-based organization company, has the answers.

Salloux advises first checking the current [TSA rules](#) for banned and acceptable carry-on items. She also suggests creating a checklist you can refer to each time you pack so you don't forget anything.

The right bag will go far in helping you pack well. Salloux says, "If you often travel with a laptop, invest in a bag that is made to carry one but will also fit all your other things." This way, you're not carrying more than one bag. She also suggests using a backpack to free up your hands, and says there are professional and upscale options. No matter what, use a bag with several compartments to separate different types of items, and make sure your bag is a bit bigger than you need so you don't struggle getting items in and out.

For easy access, Salloux recommends designating a separate holder for travel documents, and creating a pre-packed baggie of everything—earplugs, inflatable pillow, etc.—you like to have on a flight. That way, you don't have to pack it every time you travel. Finally, she suggests including a change of underwear and any medications in case your baggage doesn't arrive with you.

Want more packing tips? Listen to an [interview with Erika Salloux](#) on packing for your next beach vacation.

Have a great travel tip you'd like to share? Send your insider travel strategies to editor@smartertravel.com.

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