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On 7 Ways to Cut Down Your Luggage: A Caribbean Budget Travel Tip



And so you have finally decided to take that long sought-after Caribbean vacation. Days before your departure you're so excited you could hardly sleep and you spend most of your time packing things that you feel might contribute to maximizing your fun in the sun.

But hold on just a minute and think about what you're doing. Before you place those two extra snorkeling gears, swimsuits, sneakers, golf clubs, and what-have-you, ask yourself whether you really need these things.

Because these days the lines at security and customs are long. The world is changing and this is just one of the consequences of that change. There's no doubt the lines are going to get even longer as time goes. . Even the simple task of going through a metal detecting door can take forever. How much more if you have too many suitcases with you, not to mention that other suitcase you have for your little "extras?" Now, going through airport security and customs is REALLY going to take forever.

The biggest and most common error that travelers are wont to commit is to bring too much luggage with them. Think about it. Do you really need four extra pairs of swimming trunks for a week-long vacation? While your fear of leaving behind something crucial is understandable, think first about being bogged down with a collection of bulky bags. Consider the circumstances and realize that the latter is really far more damaging than the former.

Packing less for your Caribbean travel is prudent not only because it is less time-consuming and gives you the power to get through customs much more quickly, but also because it can save you money. A lot, in fact, starting with the amount of time you save by just breezing past customs instead of getting stuck there, and as a consequence, be late for your flight. The world waits for no man, as the saying goes. Your plane certainly won't wait for you when other passengers are already in their seats and roaring to go so you'll be forced to buy a new ticket for the next flight.

Strategize: Mobility is Key to Budget Travels

Whether you are going to the Caribbean, or Hawaii, or the Bahamas, or Europe, or Asia, the key to an effective budget travel is mobility. For instance, it is most likely that when an innkeeper is quoting a high price you're going to walk. And when the air courier service arranged a \$100 USD flight to Europe for you, it means you are limited to two carry-on bags for your overseas trip.

There are several more examples that clearly portray how being able to move easily from one place to another is important in budget travels. In fact, a common one (and one I'm sure you are familiar with) is the subway, which is admittedly a cheaper ride from the airport than a cab. When you decide to take it, you're going to inconvenience yourself and others on the train with four or five bags at your feet. Better hail that cab then and cross your fingers that the dollar meter won't take too much chunk off your budget.

Are you beginning to get the idea? Budget strategy really does depend on mobility. In fact, I'm willing to bet that every strategy or plan out there designed to help you budget for that dream vacation of yours is hinged on your mobile ease.

Well, of course, there are suitcases with wheels these days so tagging along five or so suitcases isn't as bad as it used to. Plus, some travelers have the muscle and strength to get those bags where they need to go. But whether you are capable or not, wheels or not, your trip won't get off to a good start when you find out that your budget room in Puerto Rico is up five narrow flights of stairs. It isn't a very picture, that one.

Moreover, the Caribbean is comprised of thousands of different islands. If you decide to go island-hopping, you'll be crossing seas and borders, thus multiplying your waits at baggage carousels, as well as the chances that someone will walk

away with your “essentials” or help themselves to your valuables when the bags are out of your control.

Safety Issue: Don't be a Stranger in a Strange Town

Granted that travel inconvenience is minimized if you pack less, a more pressing concern is your safety. Ask yourself how safe is it to arrive in an unfamiliar city with a couple or so bags in tow that practically scream “tourist” every which way you go? Might as well wear a placard that say “I'm a tourist, I'm prime catch” around your neck to entice bad elements to take interest in you, because in effect, that's what you do when two or three bags are in tow.

The efficient traveler who knows his way around may have only one bag that contains all his bare essentials. After all, that's how they got their name “bare essentials” in the first place. The barest of the bare. You're not supposed to bring your whole closet with you when you go on vacation to the Caribbean. Certainly, only novice travelers who don't know better make that mistake.

The world is filled with thugs who live for that moment when they spot persons like this. You might become a prime target for a pickpocket, a mugging, or a travel scam. And let's not forget terrorists who target people with enough money to travel.

The point is not to be someone you're not. It's not even about disguising yourself or camouflaging yourself as one of the locals because that's hardly likely in the indigenous culture of the Caribbean. The point is to appear “competent” – a confident tourist, so to speak. That's easy enough to accomplish with a single, lightweight bag slung over your shoulder. And on the plus side, it allows you to keep your money out of a criminal's pocket.

So now that you know the merits of packing less to maximize your budget for a Caribbean vacation, here are eight ways we suggest you adopt to help you pack:

TIP NO. 1: Choose Wisely

Isn't that always the norm? After all, you weren't given these choices just so you can make a bad one. It just doesn't go well with ordinary human logic. So the goal then is to choose wisely the things you need to include in your luggage.

But how do you know if choosing that thing is a wise thing to do? Simple. Find out whether the object serves multiple purposes or one crucial function. For example, you are expected to pack essential medicines or other health products not available at your destination. These things have a crucial function to your health and well-being so no one is suggesting that you skimp on them. However, when it comes to clothing, don't pack them like you do with medicine. You can always buy clothes at your destination after all. The same thing goes with photographic equipment. Boxes and boxes of extra films? High-density lens? Power cams? Tripods? Do you really need *those*? You can always pack a simple digital camera and just buy the film when you get to the Caribbean hotel you are staying at.

TIP NO. 2: Laundry Days during the Trip

This makes absolute sense and actually works, especially if your trip is longer than a few days, which your Caribbean vacation will most certainly be. There's no need to go all out when you do the laundry. Just washing out a few pieces of clothes like your swimming suit in the bathroom sink is enough to do the trick. The extra room you make in your suitcase which would have been occupied by that extra suit could be used for something more vital to your travel. Certainly, spending a few extra minutes in the bathroom is better than dragging a bunch of

bulky outfits everywhere you go. And even paying the hotel an extra fee to have them clean your clothes for you is wise, considering the circumstances otherwise.

Now, when you do decide to do laundry during your Caribbean vacation, make sure the clothes you bring are lightweight. Choose ones with fabric that will dry quickly. Also, have a care that the cloth does not wrinkle easily.

TIP NO. 3: Color Scheme

Admittedly, clothes are the one thing you can't do without. And if you plan to have a lot of fun during your Caribbean vacation, you're going to need outfits appropriate for dinner, disco night outs, casinos, boating, hiking, etc. Now, the dilemma is that you can't bring more clothes than you have to. If you were to bring an outfit for each excursion you decide to take on your Caribbean vacation, it's very likely you're going to end up with four bags. So what's the deal?

The answer is color scheme. Hey, the rules didn't say that the outfits have to be different each time. Basic black goes with almost anything. So does khaki and white. So make sure that among the clothes you pack for your Caribbean budget travel, you include enough basic blacks and whites to allow you to match up your outfits.

TIP NO. 4: Mail Items Home or Throw Them Away

Now, this tip may only work if your Caribbean trip spans two seasons, but who knows? The idea is this: mail your heavy clothing home. This is something that ingenious backpackers have been known to do in order to keep themselves as wholly mobile as possible. After all, who really wants to be weighed down by a lot of inconsequential stuff? Right. No one.

So take the tip and do away with those bulky stuff you will no longer need during your trip, such as purchases you may have made or soiled clothes. And if you don't particularly like that outfit, you can even just throw them away. Hey, what are the discount stores at the destination there for anyway but to make it easy for you to buy replacements?

TIP NO. 5: Buy Incidentals

You're in the Caribbean – a vacation destination you've been dreaming about for nearly your entire life. Don't just stand there and gawk at things from behind the glass panel. Step inside that store and buy something. Not only is it part of experiencing life in the Caribbean, but it will also help ease away your packing trouble because you know that you can easily acquire items that really are missed.

TIP NO. 6: Consider Leaving your Camera at Home

I know. It's basically sacrilege. It's the Caribbean, for pete's sake! Who ever heard of a person who doesn't bring a camera during a Caribbean vacation? Then again, think about how many postcards you can buy with the money you'll spend on film and processing. And if you really want those few personal pictures of you rappelling down Costa Rica's rainforests, pick up a "disposable" camera at that department store.

TIP NO. 7: Pack Sealable Plastic Bags

Ah, the joys of plastic. This one is pretty nifty and takes virtually zero space in your suitcase. Basically, you can use the plastic bags to store food or separate wet clothes from dry ones. You can even use it to pack your muddy shoes in so the

rest of your stuff don't get soiled. See the basic idea? One single thing, multiple purposes.

So now that you've made it this far, there's absolutely no reason why you can't tough it out with just one pack on your Caribbean vacation trip. Here's one last tip, once you've laid out all your travel essentials the night before you leave for the Caribbean, try to separate it one more time into the things you need and the things that you absolutely need. The "absolute needs" are what you should pack first.

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