

# Packing Right Makes Travel Quick and Light

It's definitely not your usual coffee table. Displayed under its glass top are an ornate silver necklace from Morocco, a brightly beaded collar from Tanzania, a Peruvian rock, Chinese coins, an elephant prod from India, a box of sand from the Sahara, and some soil from Enda Bardell's native Estonia. A passionate traveler (*not* a tourist, she insists), what she brings back is rarely anything big. She prefers to think small, and even more so on her outbound journey. Aiming to hit the overseas ground running, or at least not hanging forlornly around the baggage carousel, Bardell is out of the airport and onto the bus while her fellow passengers are still hopefully eyeing every black suitcase that slides down the chute.

Through self-discipline and practice, Bardell has trained herself to be a packer extraordinaire, refining her art to the point where she can now fit an entire vacation wardrobe into a single piece of carry-on luggage. That's plenty for a five-week trip, she says, although she could stretch it to eight if need be. The idea, says Bardell, formerly in fashion and real estate, and now a full-time painter, is to pack *small* clothing: thinner than thick T-shirts; pants without bulky pockets; thongs instead of regular underpants; and no robe at all. (Instead, she advises scooting from bedroom to shower in a T-shirt with a towel wrapped round your waist.) Everything she takes with her, almost all in natural fabrics, washes and dries quickly. The other trick, she adds, is to make sure all tops and bottoms are interchangeable. Leave your jeans behind, she advises (they don't dry fast enough) and don't take shorts either: they're not multi-functional, whereas a short skirt is. Another strategy she's learned is to pack old, discardable clothing that she can replace with new duds in wherever she happens to find her-

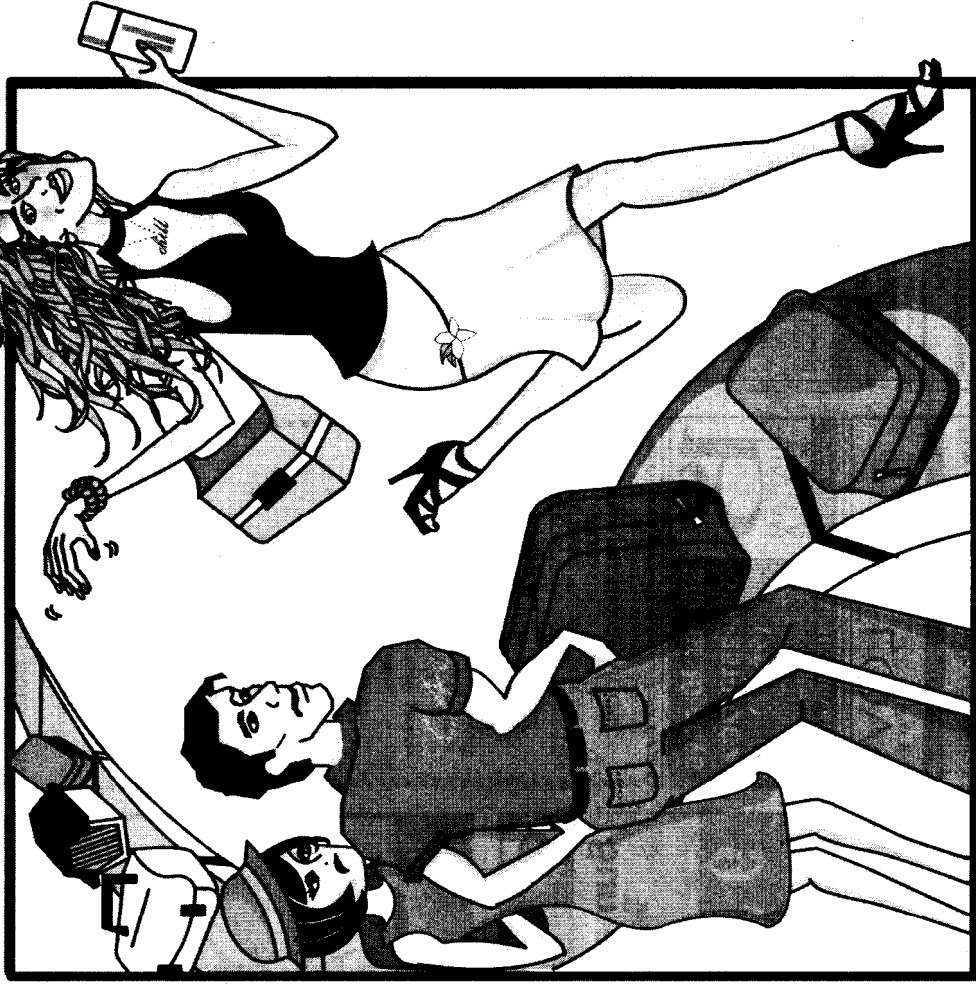
self. The tips come thick and fast. Hats are bulky so she usually buys one in the first country she visits (same with scissors and a small knife, which, for security reasons, aren't allowed in the flight cabin). Take an immersion heater (check it's the right voltage for Rome or Kuching), a metal cup, and tea bags; make photocopies of passport, credit cards, and other vital documents, leaving one copy with someone at home and one in your suitcase or, in her case, carry-on.

Bardell pulls out a typical outfit she would wear for a long flight: a mid-calf skirt in black crinkle rayon, a three-quarter-sleeve coral cotton-knit sweater, a belt, a cream *pashmina*, and a coordinated silk scarf (which, if necessary, can be used to filter out diesel fumes). It's smart enough to qualify her for an upgrade, but it's comfortable. On her feet go Mephistos, ankle-strapped so that the fit is secure enough for hiking and climbing. Shoes occupy huge space in a suitcase, so she only packs a black, midheeled pair with Mary Jane straps, plus flip-flops for foreign showers.

She also has a purse, bought 20 years ago, a crafty assemblage of zippered compartments so intelligently designed that a local store, Lifestyle West (3068 West Broadway), has adapted it in black and khaki (\$79). Adjustable straps let you wear it as a front or back daypack, or sling it over your shoulder like a conventional purse. Inside go (according to the computer printout Bardell gives me) at least 35 items, including hand wipes, travel socks, earplugs, whistle, flashlights, and almonds (in case the airline omits her vegetarian meal). She carries a padlock, too. If airport staff won't let her tow her bag aboard, she can lock it and check it, no worries.

Conventionally sized, her carry-on bag is a marvel of internal organization. Bardell

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packs it the same way every time. ("Then I know how things fit.") She rolls all her clothes as tightly as possible, never folding them, before squishing them into Ziplocs, which she squashes hard to squeeze out as much as air as possible. "Most people pack too much because they don't plan," she says. For a recent five-week European trip, she whittled her wardrobe down to five bottoms and nine tops in a palette of black, red, and the beige-cream tones that look good with her fair hair. Do the math: that's more than a different outfit a day, not including layered looks that might start with a tank under a T-shirt, then a long-

sleeved shirt, cashmere sweater, and pashmina over top. Patterned clothes are limiting, so Bardell avoids them for the most part, but she did take a midlength, bias-cut, lined chiffon skirt printed with splashy flowers on a black background, dressy enough for most holiday happenings. If there's a formal event she's aware of, she'll consider packing an Italian silk-crepe dress or long gala gowns in cream lace or black with gleaming pin dots. All of them roll to nothing. She takes no jewellery beyond plain hoop earrings and a fine gold chain. Suspended from it is a medal of St. Christopher: patron saint of travellers. ■