

Secrets of the Super Packer: She never checks a bag, but still travels in style

By Ellen Creager (/search/?q=Ellen+Creager)

4/27/2009 (5 years ago)

McClatchy Newspapers (www.mctdirect.com (http://www.mctdirect.com))

Detroit Free Press (MCT) - "Which was better? Take all you own, and struggle to carry it? Or travel light, and spend half the trip combing the shops for what you've left behind?"

Highlights

By Ellen Creager (/search/?q=Ellen+Creager)

McClatchy Newspapers (www.mctdirect.com (http://www.mctdirect.com))

4/27/2009 (5 years ago)

Published in Travel (/travel/)

AdChoices [D]

- [▶ Carry on Travel Bag](#)
- [▶ Travel Packages](#)
- [▶ Catholic Travel](#)

_ Author Anne Tyler in "The Accidental Tourist"

Two years ago, Annabel Cohen had what she thought was a great idea.

Visit Japan with no luggage at all.

Pick up what she needed by shopping at vending machines in Tokyo, which, she'd heard, sold all of life's necessities, even underwear and toothbrushes.

Actually, it wasn't true.

Cohen, 47, ended up wearing the same clothes for nine days straight and never found a vending machine toothbrush until the second-to-last day.

"What I couldn't buy in a vending machine in Japan was what I needed," says Cohen, of Bloomfield Hills, Mich., who nevertheless survived her no-luggage experiment.

"I can be inconvenienced for a couple of weeks," she says cheerfully. "A trip is not about my clothing. It's about how lucky I am to be traveling."

But even she recommends that you bring at least SOME luggage, if only for hygiene's sake.

Until December, Cohen was marketing manager for an automotive supplier, but she's now freelancing as a food writer and chef and spending a lot of time traveling. She's a single parent with a 19-year-old college daughter.

She's been many times to Brazil, where she has family. She's recently traveled to India and Mexico, Florida and New York.

In late March, she returned from three weeks in Rome cat-sitting for a friend. She took a single carry-on bag. She paid for the trip with frequent flier miles and cooked at a restaurant in Italy in exchange for meals.

Among her more unusual packing items? Several Sharpie pens, liquid bandage, Twizzlers licorice ("I always take Twizzlers: they're chewy and you make friends sitting next to you," she says.), fake pearls she bought at the dollar store but which look real, a book of matches, a red umbrella _ and an extra toothbrush.

The downfall for heavy packers "is they pack for every contingency," she says. "I take only whatever fits in the bag."

Into her 21-inch Pathfinder roll-aboard suitcase and medium-red purse go these basics: underwear, socks, two dressy black blouses (one with a gold accent), one black T-shirt with some kind of Detroit logo for a conversation-starter, two plain white T-shirts, two pairs of black pants, one pair black stretchy pants, one lightweight short brown jacket, two black chef's coats for cooking jobs, silver shoes for evening and nice black shoes. (She wears her sensible Dansko clogs on the plane.)

She also packs plastic Ziploc bags containing tiny creams, deodorant, toothpaste, ChapStick, liquid bandage, Advil, antihistamines, antibiotics for an emergency, Sucrets, disposable razor, a few Q-Tips and Band-Aids, hair elastics, extra batteries, sample-size perfume and makeup. She also fits in a camera charger, MacAir computer, Food and Wine magazine, a book, jewelry, Chi hair straightener, notebook, Casio pocket digital camera, Flip video camera, passport, wallet and another very small purse.

Her discreet black clothing takes her everywhere, even once admitting her to an elite Morocco hotel salon for a manicure where her friend in shorts was turned away.

But packing light shouldn't mean looking sloppy, she insists. She mixes clothes from Target and Chico's with designer pieces. But she tries to look nice. And her age.

"I'm not a backpacker," she says. "At this point, I'm a lady, not a kid."

She thinks any man should be able to pack even lighter than she does. No makeup. No high heels.

"Men are even easier," she says. "They can wear the same thing and same shoes every day and nobody will notice."

ANNABEL COHEN'S 10 TIPS

_Bring only dark clothes that can be worn together.

_Take one nice thing to dress up the dark clothes, such as a great necklace, tie, scarf or shoes.

_Bring only three pairs of shoes and wear the heaviest pair on the plane, along with your heaviest clothes.

- _Bring clothes you can part with, so you can discard them along the way if you need to.
- _Bring only an ultralight computer, such as the MacBook Air.
- _Employ Ziploc plastic bags to pack not just toiletries but also underwear, batteries and even matches.
- _Leave hardcover books, shampoo and hairdryer at home.
- _Limit gifts you buy. Most people back home don't really need a gift.
- _Blog from your trip. (Cohen's Japan adventure: www.vendformylife.com)
- _Bring a small U.S. map to show people where you live.

CARRY-ON RULES

A carry-on is useless if your bag won't fit into the overhead compartment. So follow these rules:

- _Buy a light suitcase. For one with wheels, look for one 7-9 pounds and no taller than 21 inches. For a carry-on bag without wheels, try the Rick Steves convertible carry-on (3 pounds, \$79.95, www.ricksteves.com).
- _Measure your suitcase. Most airlines allow 45 inches (length plus height plus width). That usually means a bag no more than 21-inches-by-14-inches-by-10-inches.
- _Do not unzip the "expander" on your bag unless you plan to check it. It will be too fat to fit into the overhead.
- _Weigh your bag full. Most airlines won't accept carry-ons over 40 pounds.
- _Make sure you can lift your full bag over your head.
- _Put liquids, gels and creams (each 3 ounces or less) into a 1-quart clear bag. (For carry-on rules see www.tsa.gov).
- _Double-check carry-on rules for your particular airline. Check airline Web sites or www.luggage.com/Carry-On-Luggage-A742.html.

© 2009, Detroit Free Press.

Rosaries, Crosses, Prayer Cards and more... by Catholic Shopping .com
(<http://catholicshopping.com/collections/virtual-candle>)



(<http://catholicshopping.com/products/o-l-of-the-highway-auto-rosary-a41ml293>)
 O L Of The Highway Auto Rosary
 (<http://catholicshopping.com/products/o-l-of-the-highway-auto-rosary-a41ml293>)
 Rosary

(<http://catholicshopping.com/products/mysteries-of-the-rosary-mosaic-46e-212>)
 Mysteries Of The Rosary Mosaic
 (<http://catholicshopping.com/products/mysteries-of-the-rosary-mosaic-46e-212>)
 Rosary

Comments

0 Comments Catholic Online

Login ▾

Sort by Oldest ▾

Share Favorite



Be the first to comment.

ALSO ON CATHOLIC ONLINE

WHAT'S THIS?

Pope Francis - Petitions UN, Muslims and Christians to address 'ongoing genocide' ...

2 comments • 10 hours ago



rafaelpmarie — God bless the Holy Father for having the courage to describe and condemn the atrocities of the Islamic state.

Houston: First Amendment Does not apply to Christian ministers? Interview with Keith ...

7 comments • 3 days ago



clintoncps — A rotten tree does not bear good fruit. The de-listing of homosexuality from the catalog of psychological disorders 40 years ...

Pope Paul VI closer to sainthood with beatification by Pope Francis - Living Faith ...

1 comment • a day ago



DLL — To truly beautify Pope Paul is to abide by his teachings regarding the family. Saint John Paul 2 continued most admirably on the work ...

(Video) South Carolin's shocking SHARKNADO! - U.s. - News

1 comment • 5 days ago



rafaelpmarie — In this case, it would be SHARKNAMI or SHARKPHOON. ;)

[Subscribe](#) [Add Disqus to your site](#) [Privacy](#)

More Travel (/travel/)

The Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes (/travel/story.php?id=55585) Watch



(/travel/story.php?id=55585)

By Catholic Online (NEWS CONSORTIUM)

The Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes is an area of ground surrounding the shrine to Our Lady of Lourdes in the town of Lourdes, France. This ground is owned and administrated by the Roman Catholic Church, and has several

functions, including devotional ... continue reading (/travel/story.php?id=55585)

The Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe (/travel/story.php?id=55584) Watch



(/travel/story.php?id=55584)

By Catholic Online (NEWS CONSORTIUM)

The Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe is a Roman Catholic church, a minor basilica, and a National Shrine of Mexico to the north of Mexico City. It is one of the most important and most visited pilgrimage sites in Catholicism. The

Basilica is visited by millions ... continue reading (</travel/story.php?id=55584>)

The apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Fatima (</travel/story.php?id=55581>) Watch



(</travel/story.php?id=55581>)

By Catholic Online (NEWS CONSORTIUM)

Francisco Marto (June 11, 1908-April 4, 1919) and his sister Jacinta Marto (March 11, 1910-February 20, 1920), also known as Blessed Francisco Marto and Blessed Jacinta Marto, together with their cousin, Lúcia dos Santos (1907-2005) were the children from ... continue reading (</travel/story.php?id=55581>)

The Church of St. James the Greater (</travel/story.php?id=55442>) Watch



(</travel/story.php?id=55442>)

By Catholic Online (NEWS CONSORTIUM)

The Apostle St. James the Greater, of whom the church of St. James in Medjugorje was dedicated, is the Patron Saint of Pilgrims. This is just one of many acts of God's providence that helps to reveal the larger picture behind the events of Medjugorje. LOS ... continue reading (</travel/story.php?id=55442>)

St. Michael's Mount (</travel/story.php?id=55439>) Watch

(</travel/story.php?id=55439>)

By Catholic Online (NEWS CONSORTIUM)

St Michael's Mount is a tidal island located 366 meters, (400 yd) off the Mount's Bay coast of Cornwall in the United Kingdom. It is a civil parish and is united with the town of Marazion by a man-made causeway of granite setts, passable between mid-tide and low ... continue reading (</travel/story.php?id=55439>)

St. Peter's Basilica (</travel/story.php?id=55438>) Watch



(</travel/story.php?id=55438>)

By Catholic Online (NEWS CONSORTIUM)

St. Peter's Basilica, is a Late Renaissance church located within the Vatican City. St. Peter's Basilica has the largest interior of any Christian church in the world. It is regarded as one of the holiest Catholic sites. It has been described as "holding a unique ... continue reading (</travel/story.php?id=55438>)

The Basilica and Expiatory Church of the Holy Family (</travel/story.php?id=55390>) Watch



(</travel/story.php?id=55390>)

By Catholic Online (NEWS CONSORTIUM)

The Basilica and Expiatory Church of the Holy Family is large, Roman Catholic Church in Barcelona, Spain. Although the church is incomplete, it is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and in November of 2010 Pope Benedict XVI consecrated the church and proclaimed it a ... continue reading (</travel/story.php?id=55390>)

Ireland's great contribution to European sculpture (</travel/story.php?id=55389>) Watch



(/travel/story.php?id=55389)

By Catholic Online (NEWS CONSORTIUM)

The historic ruins of Monasterboice are of an early Christian settlement in County Louth in Ireland, north of Drogheda. It was founded in the late fifth century by St. Buite who died around 521, and was an important center of religion and learning until the ... continue reading (/travel/story.php?id=55389)

Agia Triada Monastery (/travel/story.php?id=55336) Watch



(/travel/story.php?id=55336)

By Catholic Online (NEWS CONSORTIUM)

Agia Triada Monastery is a Greek Orthodox monastery in the Akrotiri peninsula in the Chania Prefecture, Crete, Greece. It also contains a museum. LOS ANGELES, CA (Catholic Online) - The monastery, which means "Holy Trinity", was built in the 17th century by two ... continue reading (/travel/story.php?id=55336)

The Tower of David (/travel/story.php?id=55335) Watch



(/travel/story.php?id=55335)

By Catholic Online (NEWS CONSORTIUM)

The Tower of David is an ancient citadel located near the Jaffa Gate entrance to the Old City of Jerusalem. LOS ANGELES, CA (Catholic Online) - Built to strengthen a strategically weak point in the Old City's defenses, the citadel was constructed during the second ... continue reading (/travel/story.php?id=55335)

[All Travel News \(/travel/\)](#)