

# This is the most I pack for *any* trip!



What is all this? Starting from the bottom-left corner, and going left to right:

Row 1: Harmonica, flashlight, travel adapter, flash drive, maps, guidebook, iPod (and chargers – I use my smartphone almost exclusively now), travel journal/writing utensils/small writing pad & business cards, binoculars, earplugs, jeans, swim suit.

Row 2: Passport, wallet, digital camera with charger (the shiny silver thing above the passport), smartphone (internationally capable), 3 T-shirts & 3 polo/nice/casual shirts, 2 long-sleeve shirts & 1 sleeping shirt.

Row 3: Socks, a couple bandanas, poof ball & shower/hygiene stuff, knickers (underwear).

Row 4: Backpack – the *Lookout 40* by REI\*. It has compression straps, a solid waist belt, sternum strap, and lashing spots on the bottom where a sleeping bag can fit. It also comes in a ladies model. It has, I feel, many superfluous straps...

What's missing?

Shoes, sweater/coat/jacket (if winter traveling), and paperwork (rental car/plane tickets & reservations – if you still need those). Obviously, I wear the sweater, shoes, and coat (if applicable), and the paperwork I just slip into one of the bag's outer pockets.

**Trust me:** Everything in this picture fits in the backpack with room to spare. **THIS IS ALL YOU NEED**, and you can get by on less, even for a several month-long excursion. It's also best to use stuff you already have – don't go buy a bunch of new stuff.

*\* I have used Northface's Yavapai, REI's Vagabond and Lookout (shown in the above image), Oakley's Ballistic, and [Victorinox's](#) Mobilizer packs. They each had their good points and downfalls, and I liked each of them for different reasons. From 2012-2017, however, I used Osprey's Porter 46 exclusively, because it fit my larger frame. It also has no frills, no extra pockets or straps to get in the way (like the Lookout), and strong compression capabilities.*

*Beginning in late 2017, I wanted to downsize and still look stylish, yet professional. So I picked up [Victorinox's](#) Professional Deluxe Travel Laptop Backpack from their Altmont 3.0 collection. Its functionality and sleek look appealed to me, as did its ability to fit in the overhead bin of small commuter planes. Even though it's a scant 25 L (compared to the Osprey's 46 and Lookout's 40), it fits me very well, even with my large frame and broad shoulders. Plus, it also has a dedicated, padded, and separate laptop space which is super nice, since I increasingly need my laptop with me – also easy to access when passing through security. None of the other packs I've used had such a feature. Still, if I don't need to have a laptop with me, I can usually get by with the Day in [Mountainsmith's](#) Lumbar Series – it's very versatile, and at 854 cubic inches, it's just the right size for most week-long excursions, especially more rugged/less professional ones.*