// Jeremy Maluf

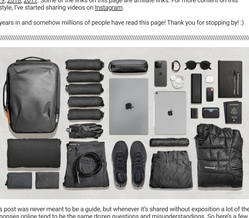
Indefinite Backpack Travel

Updated September 2025

In 2015 I got rid of everything I owned that didn't fit in a laptop backpack, and I've been living at this level of minimalism since. The idea is to only own what I need, which allows me to focus more, spend less, travel spontaneously and simply live.

I update this post yearly, with past versions available on the Internet Archive: 2022, 2021, 2020, 2019, 2018, 2017. Some of the links on this page are affiliate links. For more content on this lifestyle, I've started sharing videos on Instagram.

10 years in and somehow millions of people have read this page! Thank you for stopping by! :)



This post was never meant to be a guide, but whenever it's shared without exposition a lot of the responses online tend to be the same dozen questions and misunderstandings. So here's a few words to address those.

Onebag travel is unquestionably the best way to travel. Traveling without luggage removes just about every pain point associated with flying, such as checking bags, overhead compartments, bag fees, waiting in line, and needing to drop off luggage before an adventure. Just stroll into the airport an hour before your flight, and walk off your plane directly to your destination. I'm not here to sell you on this. r/onebag is a community built around this and a good place to learn more.

As to how I got here, I've never really owned much at any point in my life, so once I started traveling frequently this seemed like the natural evolution of my lifestyle. Because I've been doing it for so long, it's really not something I think about often.

Of course, I have taken the time to optimize each thing to be the best possible: I'd much rather pack a 4oz jacket over a 1lb jacket. However, it's worth mentioning I don't take part in the consumerist side of the travel/hiking communities, which focuses more on expensive brand names than practicality. Buy only what you need; a $100 setup is nearly as good as a $10,000 setup. Sometimes spending more will get better quality or versatility, but it's never worth obsessing over. Remember, the perfect travel gear doesn't exist (relevant XKCD).

In terms of the nomad lifestyle, while I prefer fast-paced travel, it's not great for productivity, finances, and friends, so I now stay in cities for longer periods. This allows me to maintain social relationships and explore cities deeper. It also allows me to do "zero-bags" trips in which I travel with just the contents of my pockets. Long term, I will always travel with as little as possible.

With exposition done, here's the list of everything I own.

Packing

- Aer Slim Pack. In 2020 I made a custom 10L bag, but it wasn't very durable so for the moment I'm back to tech bags (MYOG bag v2 coming soon). At 9L this bag has the perfect storage capacity for all my stuff minus hiking gear, and fits well within the 'personal item' size requirements of even the most strict budget airline. I permanently keep an Airtag inside and attached some Nite Ize S-biners to the zipper pulls to lock the bag from casual theft.
- Rains Pencil Case. The closest thing I've found to the perfect dopp kit. Use it for toiletries and for storing first aid and random small things. It's the perfect capacity for the "travel size" version of everything. Seems to be permanently out of stock now as Rains shifted their product lineup to lower-quality versions that more prominently display their logo.

Tech

- Macbook Air M2 13". Caved and replaced my 12" Macbook with the closest Apple Silicon model. I miss the generation of ultralight laptops, but these new replacements are incredibly powerful. Crossing my fingers one day we'll get the M series chip in a smaller form factor.
  - Standout apps: Pixelmator Pro, Final Cut Pro, Privacy, Carrd.
- iPhone 15 Pro. 256GB. Solid phone with an amazing camera. Sans case as AppleCare is cheap. I've used Verizon for the past 12 years but now I'm experimenting keeping a secondary T-Mobile eSIM for better connection in cities (and cheaper travel plans). I also keep a 'modular' iPhone 7 in my backpack for when I need a backup.
  - Standout apps: MyRadar Pro, Vinegar, Future.
- Apple Watch S7. I only use my watch for tracking workout and health data. I lose my watch frequently so I rarely buy the current generation. I wear it with a silicone solo loop band, of which I was surprised no cheap knockoffs exist - in my opinion it's the perfect watchband.
- Airpods Pro 2. With a USB-C case. I'm back to AirPods Pro after several years with AirPods 3. I'm not a fan of how silicone headphones isolate you from the world, even with transparency mode, but you just can't beat the noise cancellation for travel and crowded places.
- Samsung USB-C thumb drive. Two 256gb flash drives, one in my pocket and one in my bag. After years of data corruption issues with my travel SSDs I'm back to storing everything in the cloud, with a few files backed up locally to these drives.

Charging

- Anker 47W Dual USB-C Charger. Smaller and lighter than Apple's 35W brick. For international travel I buy myself a cheap universal travel adapter.
- Anole USB-C Cable. 1-meter, woven C-to-C cable. For charging my iPhone, Macbook, iPad and battery — everything except my watch.
- Apple Watch Fast Charger. 1 meter. I'm back to using Apple's cables after years of using compact chargers since only Apple's can charge at max speed (it's actually innovative, they moved the tech to the USB-C side of the cable to dissipate heat).
- Anker PowerCore Battery. Minimalist, matte black, lightweight, and small enough to fit in my pocket. At 20,000mAh it carries one full Macbook charge and can charge all my stuff at 30W, as fast as a wall outlet. No longer sold.

Clothing

- American Apparel 50/50 Shirts. Six when I'm on the move, twice that if I'm staying somewhere for a while. I prefer 50/50 cotton/poly over triblends for durability, and I'm not a fan of merino due to durability and price — frequent outdoor adventures mean I rip my shirts often.

  I pack my shirts by rolling them around my socks and underwear into compact 'tay rolls', which prevents wrinkling, eliminates decision-making involved with getting dressed, and makes packing as simple as tossing the rolls into my bag.

- Dam Tough Socks. Six pairs. Been wearing this brand for the past 15 years. Dam Tough merino socks are so indestructible that if they rip the manufacturer will ship you a new pair. I've walked over 5,000 miles with each pair I own and they still look new.
- Uniqlo Airism Boxer Briefs. Six pairs. Consistently recognized by travelers as the best travel boxers for good reason. Get the regular cover, not low-rise or seamless, and definitely not the cotton ones. Usually only available in-store.
- Western Rise Pants. Though I sometimes miss the 'toughness' of Levi's jeans, after a few years of wearing WR's travel pants I've fully converted. Their AT pants use a heavy material that feels comfortable yet is still super durable and holding up well after several years.

  Worn with a minimalist Grish gunmetal belt, which I've been loving more and more each year. I don't know why this belt style isn't more popular.
- Western Rise Shorts. I've never been the type of person that wears shorts, but after realizing that my legs are ten shades lighter than my arms I've decided to make the lifestyle change. Mostly worn for working out, running, and while doing laundry.
- Everlane Swim Trunks. Like shorts, I've never had swim trunks on this list. Previously they were a short-lived item, bought only for summer pool hangs and gone by my next flight. But lately I've been getting into swimming so they're now a permanent addition.
- Nike Pegasus Trail 5 Running Shoes. I no longer wear the Gore-Tex version of these shoes as those get uncomfortable in hot weather. Nike makes the best and most durable running shoes out of every brand I've tried, but I'm tired of their yearly release shtick that discontinues every design after a few months, so apologies in advance if you can't find it. I attached some S-biners to the laces for latching my shoes to my belt when walking barefoot on the beach.
- Baseball Cap. Never owned a hat for the first 28 years of my life. Now I wear one every day. More of an aesthetic choice than practical. This minimalist $4 cap is perfect.

Clothing (winter)

- Montbell Plasma 1000. The Japanese version which has pockets. Objectively the world's best down jacket by weight-to-warmth ratio; literally weighs less than my phone and can fit in my pocket. It's unreal. When layered I can feel comfortable in any weather.
- Everlane Filled Canvas Jacket. For years I thought heavy jackets can't coexist with my lifestyle, but after experimenting with outfits throughout 2024, I realized I was wrong. While canvas jackets do weigh a lot, it's worth weight not packed weight. They're also extremely durable and can be layered over both my hoodie and button-ups to withstand far more extreme weather. Obviously will not fit in my bag so needs to be worn on flights.
- Pullover Hoodie. I've tested dozens of hoodies, including high-end and custom-tailored ones. But they always get destroyed on hikes so I'm back to the cheap brands. In 2023 I switched from zip-ups to pullovers for the aesthetics and weight savings.
- Arc'teryx Alpha SL Gloves. An extra-cold NYC winter converted me into wearing gloves and now they're a permanent part of my kit. They're especially useful for my wilderness and mountain adventures. Also, wearing gloves just feels cool.
- Merino Buff. Near-limitless uses while traveling. I mostly use it as a face mask for cold weather and as a sleep mask on planes and buses, but I've also used it as a scarf, bandana, pillowcase, and more. Definitely one of the best pieces of travel gear I own.

Miscellaneous

- RE:FORM RE:01 Wallet. A super-thin minimalist wallet with a magnetic pouch for an Airtag and small items. Much thinner than my previous wallet, which was custom-built. The material RE:FORM uses is insanely durable, I've been using it for several years and it still looks brand new. Disclaimer: the founder sent me this wallet.
  - Amazon Prime credit card. A decent card that gets 5% back on some stuff and 1-2% on the rest. The fact that it's a metal card with a minimalist design and no annual fee was a big selling point for me, and it saves me a lot at Whole Foods.
  - Revolut card. Free ATM withdrawals while traveling. Most other cards have pivoted to add fees for international ATMs, Revolut is the only one I've used that hasn't (though I'm sure they will eventually). ATM map link since the app's map is rarely accurate.
  - Airtag. I've never lost my wallet, but Airtags are great for peace of mind.
  - Plus my ID, health insurance, bank cards, library card and emergency cash.
- Sunglasses. A cheap pair of polarized sunglasses, stored in a small custom microfiber pouch from a defunct eyewear startup I used to run. If you've read my previous updates you'll know I wore camera glasses intermittently since 2016. I stopped in 2024 after realizing I never used them and replaced them with a pair of normal sunglasses that actually look good.
- True Utility Keytool. Probably the world's most compact bottle opener and multitool. Bought it over a decade ago and it's been on me every day since. Not much else to say, except that over a thousand people have bought it from this Amazon affiliate link with zero returns.
- A Brolly Umbrella. Weighs less than 90g and disappears in my bag. It's a bit harder to deploy than a normal umbrella but the weight makes it worth it. It's also obviously not the most durable umbrella, so during rainy seasons I'll buy a slightly more durable one, often this one.
- Matador Nanobrv Shower Towel. Small enough to fit in my fist but also large enough to work as a beach towel. Dries incredibly quick and lasts years. I very rarely use this as I typically stay in places with towels, so it's more of a "just in case" item.
- Moleskine. Black with blank pages. Moleskine sketchbooks have been on and off my list for the past decade. It's nice having physical paper instead of only screens sometimes.
  - Staedtler Pigment Liner. 0.05mm, black. Best pen on the planet, period. Used for drawing.
  - BIC Ballpoint Pen. Black. Second best pen on the planet. Used for writing. Also useful on planes when they hand out immigration forms.
- Dopp Kit. As minimalist as a toiletry kit gets. Most items get cycled out every month or two. All stored in the Rains pencil case, along with first aid and other small items.
  - Marvis Toothbrush and Marvis Jasmine Toothpaste
  - Generic floss, razor, deodorant, and tweezers
- First Aid Kit. My FAK has reduced in size over the years and now contains just the bare necessities. Everything is stuffed in a repurposed Altoids tin, which does get annoying to restock, so I sometimes resort to prepackaged Coleman kits.
  - Bandaids, antiseptic and alcohol wipes
  - Super Glue
  - Emergency Mylar Blanket
  - Mosquito Repellent
- Miscellaneous small things. Crammed in my FAK or in random pockets around my bag.
  - Tech kit. SIM card remover, iPhone teardown tools, Apple Pencil tips, Airtag batteries.
  - Also my passports and various documents

Outdoor gear

The stuff I toss in my backpack for lengthy hiking trips, like parts of the PCT or mountains around the US and Mexico. I haven't done any trips outside of weekend hikes recently so most of this gear needs to be upgraded to be more ultralight.

The most difficult part about traveling with backpacking gear is keeping it airport-friendly. Knives, fuel, tent stakes, and tent/trekking poles aren't allowed in carry-on, and while carbon fiber stakes and poles can usually sneak through, it's not reliable.

This setup weighs **4.4lbs/2kg** and should drop to **3.5lbs/1.5kg** with the mentioned upgrades. When optimized for volume, a full UL backpacking setup can see loss than 10L of bag space.

- 3F UL Gear tent. The best affordable ultralight tent ($70 when I bought it). I eventually want to replace it, but my commitment to staying compact in addition to ultralight rules out most UL tents as they're typically made out of bulky DCF. The Lofoten 2 is appealing but I'm hoping eventually I'll find the time and resources to build my own.
- Sleeping bag. Unknown brand. Technically a liner but it works well enough for me. If I ever plan a trip to somewhere really cold I'll replace it with something better.
- Thermarest NeoAir Uberlite. An ultralight sleeping pad that weighs less than my phone. Size small, which doesn't cover my lower legs but is worth it for the volume and weight savings.
- Nitecore NU25 UL. An ultralight headlamp that weighs virtually nothing, fits in my pocket and is charged via USB-C. Although it is objectively the best headlamp, it feels like cheap plastic.
- Portable kitchen. Everything but the fuel fits within the mug, which is also the perfect size to cook a packet of ramen. May switch to an alcohol stove eventually.
  - Toaks 450ml mug
  - BRS-3000T stove
  - Titanium spork
  - Bic lighter
  - 100g fuel canister
- Sawyer Mini water filter. Probably the most important thing on this list and arguably the only thing I couldn't survive without.
- Smartwater 1L bottle. Two, one carries sanitized water with a sports cap to backflush the water filter while the other carries raw water with the filter on top.

In consideration

I clearly don't buy things very often, and one way to make sure all my purchases are well thought out is to maintain a list and only buy items that have been on the list for some time. Rather than saving them as browser bookmarks I'll just put them here.

- iPad Pro M4 w/ Apple Pencil Pro. Pricy upgrade but the form factor and specs are insane.
- Apple Watch S10. Improved form factor. No real difference otherwise.
- Insta360 X5. 360 cameras are amazing for unique POV and third person shots.
- DJI Mini 4 Pro. I love flying DJI drones. Never traveled with one due to size. This solves that.

Thank you for reading!

I send the occasional email to this list, including notes on projects and interests, travel adventure write-ups, and notifications for when I post updates to this site.

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