



Release At Will

OVERPACKING, HIGH HEELS ARE BIGGEST TRAVEL FAUX PAS

Advise the Experts from the U.S. Tour Operators Association

Over packing and high heels are the two biggest faux pas travelers make, according to a poll of US Tour Operators Association member companies. The association – whose members send more than 11 million people yearly on tours and vacation packages – recently queried its members on the biggest mistakes people make when packing.

Over packing was the single most common mistake cited by USTOA members, followed by inappropriate footwear. As Marc Kavanagh of Celtic Tours says, “Don’t overpack. Leave room in your case for any items you may purchase.”

Down on the heel

Women’s high heels topped the list of footwear faux pas, especially where walking is required. For instance, when visiting Australia and New Zealand, Kieron Keady of Qantas Vacations cites ladies wearing high heels or elevated footwear on sightseeing programs where walking is required, such as Ayers Rock in Australia and on rainforest walks, etc. as the biggest mistake. “If in doubt carry a pair of inexpensive sandals in your handbag!” he advises.

Even in sophisticated cities such as New York, Nico Zenner of Travel Bound advises, “Leave the high heels for high heel events.” Low heels are also a “must” if you’re heading for an African safari. Pamela Lassers of Abercrombie & Kent advises that two pairs of comfortable walking shoes with low or no heels and textured soles are all you need as footwear on an East African Safari.

The experts at TravelSmith, purveyors of travel clothing, gear, and accessories, agree that bulky high heels are a double faux pas, compromising comfort as well as packing space. They advise lightweight and supportive laceless shoes that can ease you through the airport and a full day of touring.

Jackets in Europe

Kelsey Merwick of Go-Today.com says that a very common mistake on excursions is not bringing along a jacket for cool evenings. “The first time I visited Paris, I didn’t bring a coat on a day trip. During the day the sun was warm and I was comfortable, but as soon as the sun set, temperatures dropped and the wind picked up. I ended up having to buy a cheap shawl to wrap up in until I could get back to our hotel.”

Know who the foreigner is

Lastly, when overseas, be sensitive to the local culture. Ron Letterman of Classic Vacations says, "I once had an American tourist ask me why we hired foreigners as guides. I tried to explain that when you are in their country you are the foreigner and you are a guest in that country. It is up to you as a traveler to adapt to the culture of the country you are visiting and not up to the local population to adapt to our culture."

About USTOA

"Many tour operators and vacation packagers provide packing guidelines in their brochures and with their travel documents to help you with your packing decisions," says Bob Whitley, USTOA president and a veteran traveler who has visited more than 100 countries.

USTOA members number more than 130 of the top brands selling worldwide tours and packages in the U.S. The association's Active members must adhere to the travel industry's strictest standards, including participation in the Travelers Assistance Program, which among other things, requires each Active Member Company to set aside \$1 million to protect travelers payments in case the company goes out of business.

For more helpful information on planning a vacation as well as a listing of USTOA members visit www.ustoa.com or phone 1-800 GO-USTOA (1-800-468-7862).

About TravelSmith

More suggestions on travel-friendly footwear and travel gear can be found at travelsmith.com/flightfriendlyshoes or by calling 1-800-950-1600.

Since 1992, TravelSmith has offered the most travel-worthy clothing, accessories, and gear available. Every item sold – whether via its catalog, online at travelsmith.com, or at its outlet stores – has been tested for reliability and ease of care at home or on the road. TravelSmith is based in the San Francisco Bay Area but its products, from sophisticated wrinkle-resistant clothing to durable, lightweight luggage, are favorites of savvy travelers everywhere.

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Contact:
Linda Kundell
Kundell Communications
(212) 877-2798
LRKPR@aol.com

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