

consumer reports luggage buying guide

Consumer reports luggage buying guide is an essential resource for anyone looking to purchase luggage that meets their travel needs and preferences. With numerous options available on the market, choosing the right suitcase or bag can be overwhelming. This guide will provide you with valuable insights into the various types of luggage, features to consider, and tips on how to make an informed buying decision. Whether you're a frequent flyer, a casual traveler, or someone planning a special trip, understanding what to look for will enhance your travel experience.

Types of Luggage

When shopping for luggage, the first step is to understand the different types available. Each type serves a unique purpose and is designed to cater to various travel styles.

1. Hard-Shell vs. Soft-Sided Luggage

- Hard-Shell Luggage:
 - Made from materials like polycarbonate or ABS.
 - Offers better protection for fragile items.
 - Usually more water-resistant.
 - Tends to be heavier and less flexible in packing.
- Soft-Sided Luggage:
 - Made from fabric materials such as nylon or polyester.
 - More lightweight and flexible, allowing for easier packing of oddly shaped items.
 - Often has exterior pockets for additional storage.
 - Less protective against impacts.

2. Carry-On vs. Checked Luggage

- Carry-On Luggage:
 - Typically measures up to 22 x 14 x 9 inches.
 - Fits in the overhead compartment or under the seat.
 - Ideal for short trips or as a supplement to checked luggage.
 - Saves time at the airport, eliminating the need for baggage claim.
- Checked Luggage:
 - Larger and can vary in size (usually 24 inches and up).
 - Designed to be checked at the airline counter.
 - Suitable for longer trips where more packing space is required.

- Risks of damage or loss during transit.

3. Specialized Luggage

- Garment Bags: Great for business travelers who need to keep suits or dresses wrinkle-free.
- Backpacks and Duffels: Versatile options for various travel activities, including hiking or gym trips.
- Wheeled Luggage: Offers convenience with built-in wheels for easy maneuverability.

Key Features to Consider

Once you've determined the type of luggage you need, consider the following features that can significantly impact your travel experience.

1. Material Durability

- Fabric: Look for high-denier nylon or polyester for soft-sided luggage, as these materials are typically more resistant to wear and tear.
- Hard-Shell: Polycarbonate shells are lightweight yet strong, while ABS is heavier but tends to be less expensive.

2. Weight and Size

- Ensure that your luggage adheres to airline weight restrictions.
- Consider lightweight options to maximize packing capacity without exceeding limits.

3. Security Features

- Locks: Built-in TSA-approved locks are ideal for security during travel.
- Zippers: Look for heavy-duty zippers that are less prone to breakage.
- Anti-theft Technology: Some bags come with RFID-blocking pockets or locking mechanisms.

4. Mobility and Maneuverability

- Wheels: Opt for spinner wheels for 360-degree movement, which makes

navigating through busy airports easier.

- Handles: Consider telescoping handles that can be adjusted for height, as well as built-in side handles for easy lifting.

5. Organization and Accessibility

- Pockets: Look for multiple compartments to help keep your belongings organized.
- Expandable Zippers: Some luggage features expandable compartments for additional packing space when needed.

Buying Tips

To ensure a successful luggage purchase, keep the following tips in mind:

1. Read Consumer Reviews

- Utilize consumer reports and reviews to gauge overall satisfaction and performance.
- Look for feedback on durability, functionality, and customer service experiences.

2. Check Warranty and Return Policies

- A good warranty can provide peace of mind regarding the quality of your luggage.
- Familiarize yourself with return policies in case the product does not meet your expectations.

3. Compare Prices

- Research prices from various retailers, both online and in-store.
- Consider seasonal sales or discounts to get the best deal.

4. Test Before You Buy

- If possible, visit a store to physically inspect the luggage.
- Test the wheels, handles, and zippers to ensure they operate smoothly.

5. Think Long-Term

- Invest in high-quality luggage that will withstand the rigors of travel over time.
- Consider your travel habits and choose luggage that aligns with your future needs.

Popular Brands and Their Offerings

Several brands are well-known for their high-quality luggage. Here's a brief overview of some popular options:

1. Samsonite

- Offers a range of hard and soft-sided luggage.
- Known for durability and stylish designs.
- Provides a variety of price points to accommodate different budgets.

2. Travelpro

- Favored by airline professionals for its durability and functionality.
- Known for its innovative designs and organizational features.

3. Away

- Popular for its sleek design and smart features like USB charging ports.
- Offers a lifetime warranty, emphasizing quality.

4. Tumi

- Premium brand known for its luxury luggage.
- Focuses on durability, style, and advanced technology features.

5. Rimowa

- Renowned for its iconic aluminum and polycarbonate luggage.
- Combines luxury with functionality, although at a higher price point.

Conclusion

A comprehensive consumer reports luggage buying guide is invaluable for selecting the right luggage for your travel needs. By understanding the types of luggage, key features to consider, and practical buying tips, you can make an informed decision that enhances your travel experience. Whether you prefer hard-shell or soft-sided, carry-on or checked luggage, investing in the right bag will ensure you travel in style and comfort. Remember to assess your specific travel habits, read reviews, and compare options to find the perfect luggage that will serve you well for years to come. Happy travels!

Frequently Asked Questions

What should I consider when choosing luggage according to Consumer Reports?

Consumer Reports recommends considering factors such as size, weight, durability, security features, and ease of maneuverability when selecting luggage.

How does Consumer Reports test luggage?

Consumer Reports tests luggage by evaluating its durability, ease of use, weight, and performance during simulated travel conditions, including rolling and handling.

Are hard-shell or soft-shell suitcases better, according to Consumer Reports?

Consumer Reports states that hard-shell suitcases offer better protection for fragile items, while soft-shell luggage is often lighter and more expandable, making the choice depend on individual travel needs.

What features should I look for in carry-on luggage?

Look for carry-on luggage that meets airline size regulations, has good organization options, durable wheels, and a comfortable handle, as highlighted in Consumer Reports.

How important is warranty when buying luggage?

Consumer Reports emphasizes that a good warranty can provide peace of mind and protection against defects, making it an important consideration in your luggage purchase.

What are some highly-rated luggage brands by Consumer Reports?

Brands like Samsonite, Travelpro, and Briggs & Riley are often highly rated by Consumer Reports for their quality, durability, and customer satisfaction.

What is the average lifespan of luggage according to Consumer Reports?

Consumer Reports suggests that the average lifespan of luggage can range from 5 to 10 years, depending on usage, quality, and care.

How can I maintain my luggage to ensure longevity?

To maintain luggage, Consumer Reports advises cleaning it regularly, checking zippers and wheels for functionality, and storing it in a cool, dry place when not in use.

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