

Luggage

by Kyle Stanley



I've always been fascinated by history. How did people do things before we did? What tools did they use? This fascination gets deeper into the high-class people of yesteryear; I love thinking about the aristocrats, tastemakers and globetrotters of the early 1900s. One thing that has always interested me is how they travelled.

When you look at these old photos or videos you notice two things: Everyone was dressed in semiformal wear, and they had really great, well-built luggage.

The first one surprises many people because if you were to step into an airport today, you'll usually see men in trainers and T-shirts, and women in yoga pants and tank tops. The uniform for most when traveling today is based around comfort: "I'll be sitting on a plane for X amount of hours and I want to make sure I am comfortable the whole time."

I think our ancestors dressing up for travel was based around the fact that traveling back then was more of an exploration of the unknown—they were headed to places they'd never seen before, or maybe only heard of through family or friends. There was no television or internet to get a pre-experience completed.

The other aspect of people dressing well during travel was based around the fact that it was a privilege to be able to afford to travel. Poor people didn't travel much; it was the rich who flew in planes or took trains or limos to their destinations.



Besides my private practice, I also speak to other dentists about 40 times per year, so I'm on a plane almost every week. I've tried to keep this idea of vintage travel in my heart when I get on a plane. I always dress up—I usually wear a suit, nice shoes and even a tie to show my appreciation to be able to travel. When someone is dressed well, they will inevitably get respected more. It's just the way of the world.

Now let's talk luggage: When you see vintage photos, you'll notice the amazing trunks and suitcases that everyone travelled with. Usually these were wood-framed, leather-bound pieces hand-crafted by a local artisan. They didn't have wheels, and often the people traveling weren't the ones handling the bags; in photos, you'll see them being hauled by a bellboy or assistant. I love this type of luggage.

I must confess, I'm a little obsessed with things that look old but function with new technology. This means everything from cars to bags and gadgets. When I started traveling a lot in my early 20s, I wanted luggage that had an old-time look and was built to last for a lifetime, but was practical. I found it in a few different companies.

The first thing I needed was a carry-on bag with rollers. I loved the look of that leather suitcase but it made no sense to have one without wheels for plane travel. Alstermo Bruk and Globetrotter have been making luggage the old-fashioned way, with wooden frames, for more than 150 years and have perfected it through hand-crafted precision. The greatest thing was that they had added discreet wheels to make their luggage more practical while keeping the vintage look.

I've been using my rolling luggage for a decade and they just keep getting better. I even gave my wife a custom Alstermo-Bruk luggage piece for our wedding with our wedding date engraved on it!



Once I had my custom luggage, I needed everyday bags for going to the office, a Dopp kit, etc. I then came across saddleback leather. I had found the holy grail of bags: full-grain leather, a 100-year warranty—yes, you read that correctly—and beautiful designs.

I've ordered many bags which I still have today. I can beat these bags up day-in and day-out whether I'm traveling in Brazil or just on my way to work in Beverly Hills, and their patina only increases with age.

The best part about these bags is their slogan; "They'll fight over it when you're dead." My 3-month-old son will have some nice heirloom bags to travel with someday. ■