



January/ February 2009



PERSONAL SHOPPER

Smart Traveler

New Rules Call for New Bags

Lower allowances and higher fees mean travelers need different luggage strategies. By LINDA BURBANK

Luggage manufacturers are rising to the challenge with gear that protects your wallet as well as your stuff. The new airline fees are cumulative, meaning that you'll be charged for bags each way, and you're double-dinged if your suitcase is both overweight and over-size. Laptop users: New "checkpoint friendly" bags unhinge and lie flat so screeners can get a look without the computer having to come out.

▪ **CARRYING ON** Skip the \$15 checked-bag fee most airlines charge and fly with only hand luggage. Organized bags make the most of the 45 linear inches you can bring on board. That's length+width+depth, with a 22-inch maximum length (20 inches on some international carriers). Check out Eagle Creek's Tarmac 22 (\$275), with built-in compartments, or the ZUCA Pro (\$285, *below*), with internal packing pouches, and an external frame that doubles as a seat.

▪ **EVERY OUNCE COUNTS** Overweight bags will cost you \$50 to \$100. Don't waste up to a third of your 50-pound allowance on your suitcase alone. Antler's capacious Size Zero (\$240) 28-inch soft-sided roller is just under eight pounds. Hard cases

are making a comeback, thanks to ultra-Titan's 360° Four Diamond 27-inch, four-wheeled trolley (\$660, *top*) weighs 10.4 pounds.

▪ **GET OUT THE DUFFEL** Can't pack light? Consider a rolling duffel, which offers some structure, minimal weight, and huge capacity—perhaps even enough to avoid checking a second bag, which will set you back \$25 to \$50. Eagle Creek's Swerve (\$200) holds 5,800 cubic inches, weighs 8.4 pounds, and is under most airlines' 62-linear-inch maximum. EBags' Mother Lode 29-inch wheeled duffel (\$190) contains movable shelves to keep your gear from going a-jumble. Decidedly more push is Victorinox's new Tallux line (\$330), including a 28-inch upright with protective foam-backed panels that bounce back after getting squashed.

▪ **CONVERTIBLES** Luggage that changes as your plans do may also help you skip a second bag. Briggs & Riley's Base-line expandable uprights contain a spring-loaded mechanism that adds 30 percent more packing room. Eagle Creek's Switchback Max 22 (\$290), with its zip-off daypack, can pass as your carry-on, or carry-on plus personal item—or worst-case scenario, your daypack and gate-checked bag on overfull flights.

