



MIDYEAR AUTO INTROS

**SMART MOVES TO MINIMIZE
STUDENT-LOAN DEBT**



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LEADERS *of the* PACK

- * CARRY-ON
- * CHECK-THROUGH
- * DUFFEL BAGS
- * GARMENT BAGS

The latest luggage is designed to create more space when you use it and save more space when you store it. On some soft-shell models, you can expand the depth for more storage, then compress it to the original size. On hard-shell models, manufacturers have added exterior pockets.

By Christina Dyar

For most consumers, having luggage that creates space means sitting on a bag or case that's crammed with clothes just so you can close the lid. However, several manufacturers today redefine what it means to save space when you use luggage or when you store it, because they added first-of-a-kind expansion systems as well as features that allow you to collapse the luggage, so it fits under a bed or behind a door.

Manufacturers also introduced features that are designed to make luggage that's more versatile and easier to maneuver. For example, you now can buy hard-shell models that have exterior storage compartments, such as a pocket for a tablet computer.

SPACE CASE. You've been able for some time to expand the depth of soft-shell carry-on luggage to fit more of your stuff, but now the luggage also can be compressed to the original depth, so it still fits in the airplane's overhead bin. This new feature was introduced in 2012 on some Briggs & Riley and Samsonite models.

Both manufacturers' systems use mechanisms that are attached inside of the top and bottom panels and extend the depth of the bag by as much as 34 percent. After the bag is packed, you zip it closed and



push down on each side to compress the luggage. This capability means that you more easily can bring back souvenirs from your trip or add about four shirts when you pack. Based on our hands-on evaluation, we believe that if you pack a

heavy book or other bulky item, the bag might not compress to its original size, but the compression increases the likelihood that the luggage still will fit in the overhead bin.

You'll pay at least \$399 for a two-

wheel carry-on model that has the expansion/compression feature. No four- or eight-wheel models exist, because the expansion/compression systems don't allow for such construction, according to manufacturers. Briggs &

✓ Best Buys in Luggage

Best Buy Categories

[P]=Premium selection
[M]=Midrange selection
[E]=Economy selection



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Best Buys for luggage were selected based on quality of construction and features.

All Best Buy selections for wheeled carry-on uprights and wheeled duffel bags meet airline size regulations for carry-on luggage. If they expand beyond their normal depth, however, they might be too large to be carried on and must be checked.

Best Buys in wheeled check-through uprights might exceed check-through weight restrictions when they are full.

All wheeled carry-on Best Buy selections are based on two-wheel models. All wheeled check-through Best Buy selections are based on four-wheel models, because we believe that check-through luggage that has four wheels is easier to handle than is check-through luggage that has two wheels.

Unless otherwise noted, a lifetime warranty doesn't include replacement for damage that's

caused by an airline.

Dimensions for garment bags measure when the bag is folded.

Denier refers to the density of the yarn that's used in soft-shell fabrics, such as nylon.

Best Price is a reflection of the lowest retail price that was available at press time and is subject to change.

WHEELED CARRY-ON UPRIGHTS

[P] Briggs & Riley Baseline U121CXW

MSRP: \$449; Best Price: \$449

>> No other carry-on upright has a better construction or a better warranty than the Baseline U121CXW has. (The warranty also covers damage that's caused by an airline.) This model also is the least expensive model that has a system that allows you to expand the bag (by 34 percent) to carry more clothes, then compress the bag to its original size so it fits in an airplane's overhead bin.

Features:

- * Dimensions: 20-1/2 in. (h) x 15-1/2 in. (w) x 7-13/16 in. (d)
- * Weight: 9.2 lbs.
- * Shell fabric: 1680-denier ballistic nylon
- * Colors: Black, olive green
- * Warranty: Lifetime

[M] Eagle Creek Travel Gateway 22

MSRP: \$200; Best Price: \$164

>> The Travel Gateway 22 is the least expensive and lightest wheeled carry-on upright that has a padded front computer pocket and a lifetime warranty that also covers damage by airlines. We also like that the bottom of this model is wrapped in a water-resistant material and has protective bumpers on each corner, which we believe make the bag more resistant to damage



Eagle Creek Load Warrior 22

than are other bags that are in this price range. The **Travel Gateway 4-Wheeled 22** (\$225), which has four spinner wheels for extra maneuverability, is also a Best Buy.

Features:

- * Dimensions: 22 in. (h) x 14 in. (w) x 10 in. (d)
- * Weight: 6.7 lbs.
- * Shell fabric: 1000-denier ballistic nylon, 900-denier waterproof polyester
- * Colors: Black, blue, red
- * Warranty: Lifetime

[E] Olympia Luxe JF-4221

MSRP: \$170; Best Price: \$68

>> The Luxe JF-4221 is the least expensive wheeled carry-on bag that we found that's made of 840-denier ballistic polyester, which we believe to be a material that's more resistant to damage than is the standard polyester that's used in less expensive models. This model also is the least expensive model that we evaluated that has two front pockets for extra storage as well as foam-reinforced front panels, which help to protect items that are inside of the bag.

Features:

- * Dimensions: 21 in. (h) x 14 in. (w) x 10 in. (d)
- * Weight: 8.5 lbs.

- * Shell fabric: 840-denier ballistic polyester
- * Colors: Black, Dark Rose (pink), lime green, orange, plum (purple), sky blue
- * Warranty: 10 yrs.

WHEELED CARRY-ON DUFFEL BAGS

[P] Eagle Creek Load Warrior 22

MSRP: \$230; Best Price: \$230

>> The Load Warrior 22 is the lightest wheeled duffel bag that has a lifetime warranty that also covers damage that's caused by airlines. You'd have to pay at least \$100 extra to get another wheeled duffel bag that has similar construction quality and a similar combination of features as this model has. We particularly like this model's expandable main compartment, which allows you to add an extra pair of shoes or at least three extra shirts, which is rare among wheeled duffel bags that cost less than \$300.

Features:

- * Dimensions: 22 in. (h) x 14 in. (w) x 9 in. (d)
- * Weight: 5.8 lbs.
- * Shell fabric: 420-denier ripstop polyester, 420-denier oxford polyester, 1000-denier ballistic nylon
- * Colors: Black, blue, ochre (yellow)
- * Warranty: Lifetime

[M] Athalon 15-Pocket 521

MSRP: \$200; Best Price: \$88

>> The 15-Pocket 521, which is the latest version of a previous Best Buy selection, delivers features that you typically find only in premium duffel bags, such as oversize wheels and handles, which make this model easier to handle than are other bags that are in this price range. This model's detachable see-through toiletry pouch and a



Briggs & Riley Baseline U121CXW

Riley models that have the expansion/compression feature also have an interior panel that's strapped to the top of clothes and is designed to prevent clothes from moving around and wrinkling during transit.

To help you to resolve another space issue, three manufacturers introduced collapsible carry-on and check-through luggage that's designed to be stored more easily when it isn't in use. Biaggi, Lipault and Road Warrior have mod-

els that collapse to about one-third of the original depth, so you can stow the luggage under beds or in other small spaces, such as behind doors or hanging in closets.

Biaggi and Lipault models have in-

main compartment that zips open to lay flat also are rare features among midrange duffel bags.

Features:

- * Dimensions: 22 in. (h) x 11 in. (w) x 11 in. (d)
- * Weight: 6.5 lbs.
- * Shell fabric: 1800-denier polyester
- * Colors: Blue/black, red/black
- * Warranty: 5 yrs.

[E] Olympia SRD-22

MSRP: \$70; Best Price: \$31

>> The SRD-22 is the least expensive wheeled duffel bag that we found, yet no other wheeled duffel bag that's in this price range has better construction or more features than this model does. No other wheeled economy model has more pockets (eight) than this model has, and it's the only economy model that we found that has ball-bearing in-line skate wheels, which roll more smoothly than do standard plastic wheels.

Features:

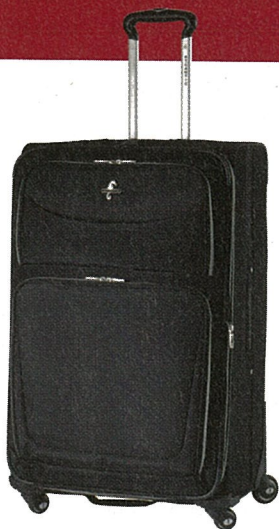
- * Dimensions: 22 in. (h) x 12 in. (w) x 12 in. (d)
- * Weight: 5.1 lbs.
- * Shell fabric: Polyester
- * Colors: Black, dark lavender (purple), navy blue, pink, red, Royal blue
- * Warranty: 2 yrs.

WHEELED CHECK-THROUGH UPRIGHTS

[P] Rimowa Salsa Air Multiwheel 26

MSRP: \$545; Best Price: \$545

>> The Salsa Air Multiwheel 26 is the lightest 26-inch check-through upright model that we evaluated. This model's 100 percent polycarbonate shell has raised ribs that allow the bag to bear more weight and to resist damage better than do nonribbed polycarbonate bags when other luggage is stacked on



Atlantic Compass 2 25

it, experts say. This model has a combination lock that is counter-sunk into the shell, which is a rare feature that reduces the likelihood that the lock will be damaged. We just wish that Rimowa had a better warranty.

Features:

- * Dimensions: 26-9/16 in. (h) x 17-11/16 in. (w) x 10 in. (d)
- * Weight: 6.4 lbs.
- * Shell fabric: Polycarbonate
- * Colors: Blue, gold, navy blue, violet (light purple), white
- * Warranty: 5 yrs.

[M] Eagle Creek Travel Gateway 4-Wheeled 25

MSRP: \$250; Best Price: \$250

>> The Travel Gateway 4-Wheeled 25 is the least expensive and lightest four-wheel model that's in this price range that also has a lifetime warranty that covers all damage. This model also has features that are rare among midrange models, such as corner bumpers that help to prevent the bag from tearing. The **Travel Gateway 4-Wheeled 28** (\$275), which has slightly more capacity, as well as the **Travel Gateway 25** (\$225) and **Travel Gateway 28** (\$250), which have two wheels, are also Best Buys.

Features:

- * Dimensions: 25 in. (h) x 17 in. (w) x 12 in. (d)
- * Weight: 7.9 lbs.
- * Shell fabric: 1000-denier ballistic nylon, 900-denier waterproof polyester
- * Colors: Black, blue, red
- * Warranty: Lifetime

[E] Atlantic Compass 2 25

MSRP: \$140; Best Price: \$111

>> The Compass 2 25 is the least expensive 25-inch check-through model that we evaluated that has four wheels, which makes this model easier to maneuver than are models that have two wheels. Although this model's polyester shell is typical among models that are in this price range, its capability to expand by 2-1/2 inches is better than that of any other other economy wheeled check-through upright.

Features:

- * Dimensions: 25 in. (h) x 10-1/2 in. (w) x 16 in. (d)
- * Weight: 9.4 lbs.
- * Shell fabric: Polyester
- * Colors: Black, cranberry (dark red)
- * Warranty: 10 yrs.

WHEELED CHECK-THROUGH GARMENT BAGS

[P] Briggs & Riley Baseline U176

MSRP: \$579; Best Price: \$579

>> The Baseline U176 is the least expensive garment bag that we found that's made of the highest rated shell fabric and has a lifetime warranty that also covers damage that's caused by airlines. We also like this model's removable extension panel, which is a rare feature that's ideal for travelers who pack dresses. The **Baseline U178** (\$649), which holds as many as eight dresses or suits, is also a Best Buy.

Features:

- * Dimensions: 24 in. (h) x 20 in. (w) x 9-1/4 in. (d)
- * Weight: 12.6 lbs.
- * Shell fabric: 1680-denier ballistic nylon
- * Maximum capacity: 6 dresses/suits
- * Colors: Black, olive green
- * Warranty: Lifetime

[M] Ricardo Beverly Hills Sausalito Superlite

MSRP: \$380; Best Price: \$169

>> The Sausalito Superlite is the lightest check-through garment bag that we found that's in this price range. Unlike other midrange garment bags, this model can hang with both sides of the bag open, which allows you to more easily pack and unpack clothes.

Features:

- * Dimensions: 21 in. (h) x 23 in. (w) x 4-1/2 in. (d)
- * Weight: 9.9 lbs.
- * Shell fabric: 420-denier microballistic nylon
- * Maximum capacity: 4 dresses/suits
- * Color: Black
- * Warranty: Lifetime

For more information about the above Best Buys, contact the manufacturers directly. See page 63.



Ricardo Beverly Hills Sausalito Superlite



TRAVEL COMPANIONS. Atlantic introduced the Link2Go system in February 2013 for its Compass Unite line. It's the first system that allows you to wrap together individual models via hook-and-loop straps, so you can roll two bags in tandem. Models that are in this line cost \$120–\$140.



NEW DEPTHS. Two manufacturers have models that allow you to expand the capacity, then compress the luggage back to the original depth.



SQUEEZE PLAY. Three luggage manufacturers have models that can be collapsed, so you can store the bags in small spaces, such as under your bed.

terior panels on all sides that unsnap from the soft shell, so you can fold them flat and compress the shell when you want to store the bag. The Road Warrior models fold and unfold when you pull on a cord that triggers a mechanism that allows the bag to flatten to about 4 inches deep. Road Warrior calls this system Micro Pop, and it's available on wheeled carry-on and check-through uprights as well as wheeled duffel bags.

outside the box You'll pay at least \$353 for a hard-shell model that has exterior storage.

Based on our hands-on evaluation, we believe that Road Warrior's system delivers the most desirable construction, because, unlike other collapsible-luggage systems, the panels and the shell of Road Warrior models stay intact when you flatten the luggage. We also found that Road Warrior's system is faster and easier to use than are the Biaggi and Lipault systems. With Road Warrior, it takes about 5 seconds to pull the cords quickly—once for the width and once for the length—to make the luggage collapse. It took about 45 additional seconds to fold or unfold the other systems, because each side has to be lifted up and snapped in place, much in the same way that you assemble a gift box.

However, the Road Warrior models are more than double the price of the Biaggi and Lipault models. For instance, the MSRP for Road Warrior's foldable 21-inch wheeled carry-on upright is \$550, while similar-size models from Biaggi and Lipault are \$239 and \$189, respectively.

POCKET CHANGE. If you prefer to use hard-shell luggage, you'll be happy to know that the first models that have exterior storage pockets that are built into the polycarbonate shell began to arrive in 2013. At press time, Briggs & Riley, Delsey and Rimowa are the only manufacturers that we found that make hard-shell models that have exterior storage, which is a great feature if you want to have easy access to items, such as your computer, boarding pass or work-related files.

You'll pay at least \$353 for a hard-

shell model that has exterior storage, but you'll pay extra if you want additional exterior storage versatility. For instance, Rimowa's Salsa Deluxe Hybrid Cabin Multiwheel IATA (\$695) has three soft-shell front pockets that are made of Kevlar and Kevlar, both of which are synthetic fabrics that are known for their durability. Briggs & Riley's Torq line wheeled carry-on upright (\$479) has a lockable hard-plastic pocket that's pad-

ded on the inside to protect your tablet. In general, you should expect to pay at least \$40 more for a hard-shell model that has additional exterior storage compared with hard-shell models that have no exterior storage.

Carry-on models that are in the Torq line have recessed pockets, so they won't affect overhead storage, but they reduce slightly the amount of storage that's available in the main compartments, so you might pack as many as two fewer shirts than you would in other similar-size luggage. The Delsey Helium Aero 19-inch wheeled carry-on upright (\$353) has a recessed pocket, too, but the fabric divider that's between the exterior pocket and the interior allows for more packing flexibility.

Another manufacturer, Visionair, added a cradle for a tablet on a \$300 hard-shell carry-on model that it calls Podpal. The cradle holds your tablet horizontally or vertically on the top of the luggage, so you can read reports or watch a movie while you wait to board your flight. Visionair says Podpal allows you to free your hands, so you can hold your coffee or read email on your smartphone. We aren't sold on tablet cradles as a must-have feature, so unless you're the ultimate multitasker who flies frequently, you can take a pass. ♦

Freelance writer Christina Dyar is former publisher of Travelware magazine and has been writing about luggage for 15 years.



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