

pack mentality

The world is an amazing place, all right, and any opportunity to explore it should be seized with unbridled enthusiasm. If only it didn't involve suitcases, says Sally Feldman

A friend flew to Spain and the UK this week for a fortnight of work and play. The temperature in Madrid is 35°C; in London it's 15°C. She took two small bags – one for cold weather, the other for hot. She could have easily carried them as hand luggage, but for the recent vagaries of baggage restrictions, which have veered in a matter of days from one transparent bag with passport and wallet to the bare essentials for any self-respecting frequent flyer (bar the Evian spray, cleanser, moisturiser, eye gel, make-up, shampoo, conditioner...). She's totally unfazed, though, "I'm sick of carting all my junk around," she says, blithely.

I, meanwhile, am just back from a weekend media trip to Huka Lodge in New Zealand. Two nights, wintry weather, one husband, two full-size suitcases. My husband packed all his winter clothing "just in case". Wholly appropriate, of course, as most of it did just that – stay in his case.

Our itinerary was simple – a tour around the splendid facilities of the lodge, then various boat, helicopter and jet-boat jaunts. Dinner on the Saturday night was a semi-formal affair "so just wear something glittery or silky, with black pants" I was advised by our host, as if a rail of shimmering numbers was a given in my wardrobe. Still, at least she wasn't referring to my husband's outfit – this was New Zealand, after all, not Las Vegas.

After years of travelling for work, I'm hanged if I can master packing light. My first, ever-elegant, editor once told me she always packed "as much as I can" and, like most first impressions, it's been a hard one to shake.

I'm also a sadly deficient clothes shopper, approaching it like a visit to the dentist, in the knowledge that the pain I endure will cost me dearly. I just tend to cry less at the dentist. Thus, my wardrobe is highly evolved for an urban-hick lifestyle. Whoever invented the phrase smart-casual

What if it's cocktails at the latest chi-chi hotspot? That means glamour shoes I can stand in for hours without getting a slipped disk, plus an outfit that doesn't mean holding my breath all night. There's really nothing less chic than a chick turning blue over the finger food.

Then there's the daywear. A suit, suity and non-suity shoes, pants/skirt/dress, long- and short-sleeve tops, windproof raincoat for any Hobart-style hill-walking, a cardie "for if it gets chilly at night", a bathing suit for spa visits, shorts/tracksuit/runners for the exercise I'm allegedly going to do to counteract the degustation and, if it's Melbourne, all of the above – in black.

Underwear's a snip after that – one pair of knickers per day plus spare (unless visiting my mother in the UK, in which case, only two pairs for however long I'm staying. Her first words of greeting, apart from "What have you done to your hair?" are "Do you have any washing?" as if I had upended my clothes into my suitcase straight from the

laundry basket). Bras – comfy-casual ones for everyday, smooth-casual ones for T-shirts, smart-pushy ones for when I'm feeling likewise. And that's it – 19.75kg of baggage on the button. But hell, better suave than sorry. **VE+T**



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should go the same way as the person who invented the singular 'pant'. A long, lingering death chained to the lemon tracksuit rack at Best & Less is all they deserve.

Clothes packing is a sticky web of what-ifs, and I'm not talking cut-price travel websites.

What if I encounter rugged terrain? It happens – even if you're only going to Hobart. So, walking boots, then. What if I have to go to a swanky dinner more than once... with the same people? That means two outfits (at least – what if I'm having a fat day?), heels that weren't made for walking, and clothes that were made for eating (preferably not white – murder with red wine, foams and any kind of jus) and with a bit of stretch for comfort after that 10-course degustation.