

Planning and Packing For The Family Vacation

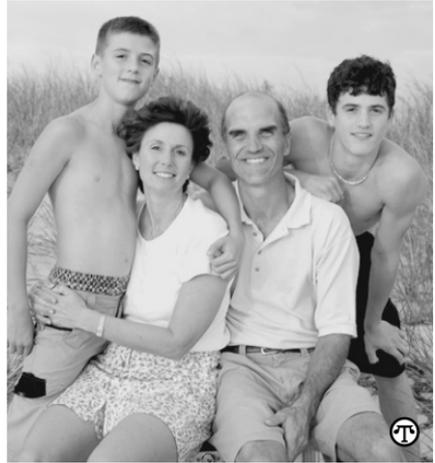
(NAPSA)—Smart travelers know that successful trips depend on planning ahead: mapping out sights to see, deciding whether to fly or drive, making reservations, and—of course—packing for the trip.

Whether you are flying or driving, traveling across the country, or venturing abroad, packing suitcases is an art. Today, more and more people are finding it convenient to ship their luggage before they leave. Shipping your things in advance means more space in the car for the entire family on long road trips. It also means less weight in the car, resulting in better gas mileage. That's especially important in light of rapidly increasing fuel prices.

Shipping luggage ahead of time is smart for air travelers, too, as it reduces stress at the airport. According to travel expert Laura Powell, "Many airlines—due, perhaps, to their economic problems—have recently started enforcing luggage weight and size limitations, and imposing fines for overages. So, if you think you might have excess baggage, or if you are trying to bring along large items such as golf clubs or water skis, shipping ahead will save you some hassle at the counter. Of course, it also will help you avoid the headache of lugging everything through the airport."

The best part of shipping your luggage in advance? Your bags are waiting for *you* at your destination.

Powell offers some helpful tips for packing and shipping your luggage:



- You can ship your suitcase; however, to reduce weight—and cost—skip the suitcase, and pack your clothes and other items in a sturdy box.

- If you are sending stuff out, you'll probably need to send stuff back home as well. One option is to pack a flattened box and a roll of heavy-duty tape for sending home souvenirs ... or dirty laundry.

- An easier option is to have your shipment professionally packaged at a national pack-and-ship retailer such as The UPS Store or Mail Boxes Etc., which have locations in more than 40 countries. Expert packaging is especially recommended for fragile items.

- No room for surfboards, bikes, fishing rods, extra reading materials, or snorkel gear? Ship these types of items straight to your vacation destination.

- Be sure to notify the place you will be staying that you are expecting a package. That way, they will sign for the package, even if it arrives before you do.