

How To Avoid Bed Bugs When Traveling

The chance of picking up bed bugs when you travel is low, but as infestations become more common throughout the world, it is important to take simple precautions. Bed bugs can hitch a ride on clothing and luggage, especially in places where travelers sleep. They are rarely found in planes, trains and motor vehicles. These tips will help you avoid bed bug bites when you travel. They can also help you avoid bringing bed bugs home.

PREPARING FOR YOUR TRIP

- Use hard-cased luggage if possible. It is more difficult for bed bugs to attach to rigid materials than to fabric.
- Pack your clothing in re-sealable plastic bags. Plastic bags are available in up to 22-gallon sizes in hardware and other stores. Bring extra bags in a variety of sizes for items you buy on your trip.
- Pack a small, bright flashlight to inspect your room when you arrive.
- Don't spray insect repellent or other pesticides on your luggage or clothing. They aren't effective against bed bugs, and they may pose health hazards.

HOTELS AND OTHER LODGING

- Ask about bed bug policies when you make your reservations or check in. A good hotel won't mind.
- An adequate bed bug prevention and control program should include regular inspections and access to a professional pest control company – even if the hotel has never had bed bugs.

INSPECTING YOUR ROOM

- Learn to recognize bed bugs in all their life stages (eggs, newly hatched, and adult) and by their markings (blood stains, shed skins and droppings).
- Place your luggage on a hard elevated surface – not on the floor, and not on upholstered furniture. If you can't find a suitable surface, put your luggage in a dry bathtub, or leave it in your car until you've done a quick inspection.
- Examine beds and box springs by pulling up the sheets at the corners and sides. Check mattress tufts and seams for bed bugs and their markings.
- Do a quick check of pillows and upholstered furniture for signs of bed bugs.
- If you can, check behind headboards and open the drawers of the nightstands and look inside.
- For short stays, consider keeping your clothes in your luggage. Keep bags closed when not in use.
- If you find signs of bed bugs, tell the manager right away, and demand another room.

COMING HOME

- Unpack your luggage in the bathroom against light-colored surfaces so you can easily see if a pest has hitched a ride. Shake out clothing in a bathtub or shower.
- Check your luggage carefully. Examine seams, pockets and straps. As a precaution, you can vacuum using an attachment that reaches into crevices. Empty the vacuum or seal and dispose of its bag outside of your home.
- Wash all clothing immediately as you normally would. If you suspect bed bugs, launder washable items in hot water and dry on the highest setting for at least 20 minutes. Dry cleaning and steam cleaning will kill bed bugs in fabrics (including soft luggage) that can't be washed & dried at high settings. Frequent travelers may want a portable heat chamber or bed bug proof luggage.