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Downsize to a Small Purse

One way to enforce a vow of traveling light is to buy a purse that's tiny — deliberately tiny. You'll soon figure out what you really need. You won't be able to shove everything into the Black Hole. In a very short time, you'll learn whether one credit card, a lipstick, and a cell phone are your essentials, or whether you really just want a money clip, a compact, and a comb.

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Downsizing doesn't make sense for everyone, but carrying miniature items inside a regular-sized bag can prevent congestion — and back pain. Valerie Steele, curator of the museum at New York's Fashion Institute of Technology, carries "a mini, mini, mini Filofax, because my back hurts if I carry too much." Shop carefully for small versions of objects you need. Don't get the biggest wallet — look around for the most compact. Look for makeup samples and other miniaturized products, like combs, address books, or a cell phone.

Even if you can't live without lots of stuff, you can travel light by making sure you've found the smallest imaginable containers. Travel shops and drugstores now carry all sorts of miniatures — collapsible toothbrushes and hairbrushes, tiny tubes of hand lotion, minuscule compacts. Use your imagination — but keep it small.

And resist the temptation to add lots of small things just because they're cute. A tote bag filled with a thousand miniatures won't be any easier to carry. And you'll still be searching for your keys.

Some suggestions:

SPEERT POCKET COMB #12, \$5, AT ZITOMER, 888-219-2888 or www.speert.com; TRAVEL COSMETIC-BRUSH SET, \$10, AT THE TERENCE CONRAN SHOP, 212-755-7249; SEPHORA LIPSTICK COMPACT, \$11, NAIL POLISH, \$4, AND FACE BLOTTING PAPERS, \$7, ALL AT SEPHORA, 877-737-4672, www.sephora.com

Written by Jennifer Tung
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