

TRAVEL

YOUR SUITCASE MAY BE FULL OF BED BUGS— HERE'S HOW TO PROTECT IT

Travel to Paris lately?



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The City of Light and Love is a dream destination for people all over the world, but recently it has **found itself flooded with unwelcome guests**—bed bugs. Since earlier this month, Paris has waged a battle with bed bugs, which have popped up all over the French capital. The pests have made themselves a home in Parisian hotels, trains, buses, movie theaters, and airports. Travelers are naturally on edge at the prospect of bringing the bloodsuckers home. Paris officials are working to deal with the issue ahead of the 2024 Olympics, which will see more tourists than usual visiting the city.

Whether or not you're traveling to Paris, you should always be diligent in making sure you don't bring bed bugs (or any critters, for that matter) home from your next trip. From what to look for to how to sanitize your belongings when you get home from a trip, here's everything you need to know to keep you (and your suitcase) safe from bed bugs.

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How bed bugs get into your luggage



Bed bugs are attracted to warmth, carbon dioxide, and blood

"Bed bugs are like mosquitos," Jon Chan, Senior Manager of Lab Operations, explains. "They are attracted to warmth, carbon dioxide, and blood. The major way they are going to probably get to your luggage is transferring from you to your clothes, and finally into your **luggage**."

And bed bugs can sense that same carbon dioxide on your dirty clothes even after you've taken them off. So if you toss them into your suitcase, guess where the critters will crawl into?

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How you can keep your luggage safe

When you first check into your hotel, do a thorough scan of your room for signs of a possible infestation. "You should always check unfamiliar beds for small yellow eggs, dark spots of crushed bed bugs, and movement," Chan advises.

Note that **cleanliness** doesn't determine the likeliness of a bed bug infestation – whether you're checking into a five-star hotel with the works or a basic motel, bed bugs might be ready to greet you either way.

You should also take extra precautions to keep your laundry sealed up (like in the airtight plastic bag that many hotels provide in the room) rather than in an open suitcase or piled on the floor. Another expert tip is to keep your suitcase on a luggage rack as bed bugs can't climb up slippery legs. However, be aware that they can hook onto the straps of the rack and get into your luggage that way.

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How to get rid of bed bugs

If you find bed bugs in your hotel, you should contact hotel management immediately, **says Stan Sandberg**, co-founder of TravelInsurance.com. Management will need to help you transfer to a clean room and get your belongings cleared of any potential infestation. You may also be able to request compensation.

If you suspect you may have brought pests home with you, the best thing to do is put everything into **the laundry** immediately. "After a trip, toss your clothes into a hot water cycle," Chan recommends. "Bed bugs will die if exposed to temperatures of 118°F or more for 20 minutes. Most homes have their water boiler set at 120°F."

Even if everything seems fine, it's smart to **sanitize** your belongings when you get home. Experts note that bed bugs can live for up to several months on clothing or fabrics without you even realizing it. Yikes.

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