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Holiday travel

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Flying for the holidays? These 13 products will make your travel experience way better

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Ah, the holidays—a season meant for quality time with loved ones, rest and relaxation and plenty of gifts to go around. The one caveat to the most wonderful time of the year, however, is the travel that comes with it.

***Gifts got you stumped?** Sign up for Reviewed's newsletter to get last-minute gift ideas and other holiday tips from shopping experts.*

This year just got a little bit complicated thanks to a winter storm moving across the country, leaving cancellations and delays in its wake. To help smooth over what is historically a stressful time to fly, we've compiled a list of some of the best products we've ever tested to help make your holiday travels way better. Here are 13 products we recommend traveling with this year.

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1. A carry-on travel backpack you can explore with

No matter if your flight is 2 hours or 12 hours, it's great to have a travel backpack or similar carry-on bag that can fit all your necessary belongings. There are plenty of stellar options for backpacks out there. The large Osprey Ozone Duplex 65 backpack—our best overall choice for

a travel backpack—is perfect for the flight cabin, but it also doubles as a carry-all when you're exploring your destination. It's durable yet comfortable and can accommodate plenty of personal items, such as a few changes of clothing and room for toiletry bags.

If you're looking for something a little less rugged, Melissa Cooper, Reviewed's senior director of marketing, recommends this stylish and professional Kenneth Cole backpack. It has plenty of room for your travel necessities, including a padded laptop pocket and a front organizer that holds chargers, tablets and notebooks in place. It even has an extra strap on the back to conveniently attach it to a rolling suitcase.

\$219 at Amazon

\$50 at Amazon

2. A travel pillow to snooze on the plane

Don't let your neck suffer through a long day of travel without the necessary support. To make resting on a long flight (or train or car ride) more comfortable, a solid neck pillow is non-negotiable.

After testing several types, we recommend the Cabeau Evolution Classic Travel Pillow—which is incredibly supportive, durable and even has an adjustable clasp for a personalized fit.

If you're generally a side sleeper, the J-Pillow Travel Pillow might be a better choice. As its name suggests, this pillow is shaped like the letter "J," and is extremely comfortable for those who prefer to rest their heads to the side. Bonus: It's easier to carry around than a typical neck pillow.

\$30 at Amazon

\$40 at Amazon

3. High-quality luggage that stands the test of time

It's time to upgrade to your old suitcase. At Reviewed, we test plenty of luggage and carry-ons from a variety of brands to judge durability, ease of use and overall quality at their price point.

The Travelpro Platinum Elite Expandable Spinner stood out as the best choice for a checked bag considering its premium build, easy maneuverability and large capacity to hold clothes. For a carry-on, we ranked the Osprey Transporter Wheeled Carry-On as our top pick—this

bag is sturdy, featuring quality wheels and a retractable handle that feels built to last. It also boasts plenty of organizational space and storage, making it a must-have for any kind of travel.

\$315 at Amazon

\$280 at Osprey

4. Protective face masks for the plane and beyond

Mask mandates have long been lifted in the U.S. for traveling domestically, but with the "triple-demic" of COVID-19, the flu and RSV (or respiratory syncytial virus) happening this winter, you might want to bring a mask anyways to keep germs at bay ahead of the holidays. Properly filtrated masks can stop the transmission of airborne particles from one person to another, which is why health officials recommend use of N95 and KN95 masks. Both masks have 95% filtration efficiency, meaning they're the gold standard when it comes to protection.

\$19 at Bonafide Masks

\$12 at Bonafide Masks

5. A meditation app to stay relaxed

During a busy holiday season, the stress of long lines and crowds of travelers is enough to leave you feeling anxious about flying. To keep nerves and stress at bay, we'd recommend Headspace, a meditation and mindfulness app that we ranked as the best meditation app out there. This app features a wide variety of meditations to help relax, destress or even cope with specific emotions along with sleep- and exercise-specific content.

Headspace is free if you want to access the more basic content like a few meditations and one nighttime guided session. But, to access all of Headspace's content, the annual membership costs \$69.99, which breaks down to about \$6 a month (which, for reference, is a little less than a basic Netflix subscription).

Try Headspace for free

6. Disinfecting wipes to clean your seat on the plane

It's peak flu season, so it certainly doesn't hurt to give your space a good wipe-down to disinfect the area you'll be spending the next few hours in. Disinfecting wipes like these Clorox ones are much more readily available than they once were. Just be sure you're using them correctly by following the instructions on the label—you may need to ensure a surface stays wet for a certain amount of time to properly disinfect.

\$12 at Amazon

7. Travel-sized hand sanitizer

Hand sanitizer is an easy staple to keep in your personal item during your travels and can give you peace of mind during your travels. The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) is currently allowing one liquid hand sanitizer container—up to 12 ounces per passenger—in carry-on bags, but you may experience a quicker security check process by sticking with a travel-size sanitizer.

\$17 at Amazon

8. A pair of noise-canceling headphones to drown out the noise

If you're seeking peace and quiet during your travels, noise-canceling headphones are a necessity. After testing over a dozen noise-canceling headphones, we recommend Sony's WH-1000XM5 over-ear headphones. They provide powerful sound, top-notch active noise canceling and they're comfortable, too. If you're firmly entrenched in the Apple product universe, you may prefer the Apple AirPods Pro for convenience and compatibility. They're the best earbuds we've tested for iPhone users as they're easy to use, have great battery life and offer incredible noise cancellation.

\$348 at Amazon

\$199 at Amazon

9. A reusable water bottle to stay hydrated

Skip the airport lines for an over-priced water bottle and bring in a reusable water bottle to use along the journey (just make sure it's empty when you bring it through TSA).

Out of all the reusable water bottles we've tested, the Brita Stainless Steel Water Filter Bottle can keep water cold for hours and even features a filtering straw to help reduce the taste and odor of chlorine found in tap water.

Your kids will appreciate a reusable water bottle, too, which is why we recommend the Kids' Hydroflask Wide Mouth Bottle as the best kids' water bottle we've ever tested. It features a convenient straw lid and is conveniently lightweight to store in a kids' backpack or personal item.

\$30 at Amazon

\$29 at Amazon

10. A portable battery for charging your electronics on the go

Nothing is worse than opening an electronic when traveling only to find out it's dead. To prevent this scenario, we recommend keeping a portable power bank or battery pack on you. Just remember to charge them before leaving the hotel or for the airport.

We prefer the Goal Zero Sherpa 100PD for charging larger devices like laptops and tablets. It can charge multiple devices at once—and fast. For phones and smaller devices, our top pick for a portable battery pack is the Mophie Powerstation PD—this powerful little device stays compact without compromising performance, charging your smartphone with speed.

\$150 at Amazon

\$67 at Walmart

11. Compression socks for the long flight

If you're susceptible to swelling legs on long-haul flights, don't forget to pack a pair of compression socks. Even if your legs don't swell during flights, you may find comfort in the stretchy, snug material regardless.

Out of all the compression socks we've tested, we recommend a pair from Figs, a direct-to-consumer brand targeted at medical professionals. Their socks are ultra-comfortable and easy to pull on.

\$28 from Figs

12. A Kindle to avoid packing heavy books

What is a holiday vacation without the perfect read? If you've been looking forward to diving into a novel on your next vacation, bring along an E-reader like the beloved Kindle (11th gen). It has a crisp display, is easy to use and best of all, it's compact. Leave the heavy books at home, but still have access to a whole library of options.

\$120 at Amazon

13. A tablet to keep entertained

Let's face it: you might be in for a long day. To make it a little better, we recommend bringing a tablet to stay sane and keep your mind off any potential travel frustrations. The Apple iPad Air (5th gen) is the cream of the crop when it comes to tablets because of its snappy performance and all-day battery life.

If you're traveling with toddlers or younger kids this busy holiday season, you'll want to make sure they're comfortable and entertained, too. The Amazon Fire 10 Kids Edition can help to keep morale high. It's the best tablet for kids that we've tested because of its colorful protective case, large screen, quick charging capability and most importantly, it's stocked with tons of free, fun content for kids to enjoy.

\$500 at Amazon

\$200 at Amazon

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