The Consultant's Packing List

Idea In Short

Pack like a professional from week one. Never check a bag, follow the client's dress lead, invest in one dependable roller bag and computer bag, and keep a written packing list inside the luggage. Five items are non-negotiable: identification, credit card, computer, power cords and phone.

You Got the Offer, Now Pack

With the consulting offer signed, the next practical question is what goes in the bag. The list below reflects years of travel, mixing common sense like shoe polish with personal preference in luggage brands. New consultants assembling their kit can treat it as a starting inventory, then adapt to their own routes and habits. One rule stands above all the gear advice:

> never check your bag. Ever!

Checked luggage means lost mornings, borrowed shirts and apologies to clients, and no schedule in consulting has room for any of the three.

Clothes: Follow the Client's Lead

Dress codes vary, so watch the client. Financial services still expects business formal, while most other environments settle on dark slacks and a button-down shirt. Keep your eyes open during the first few days of work to see what others wear, just like high school, and if genuine doubt remains, recruiting videos show what the firm considers presentable. Beyond code, be practical. Pack comfortable, neat, easy-to-travel clothes that mix and match,

favoring a dark two-piece with rotating shirts or blouses over too many shoes and one-day, super-unique outfits. Every extra garment is weight you drag through an airport at midnight.

The Roller Bag Decision

The roller bag is one of the biggest and most consequential purchases a traveling consultant makes. A good suit hanger setup inside earns its space, and a five-year warranty proves its worth the first time a wobbly handle or worn wheels get replaced free. Four-wheel spinners have their fans too, especially for navigating airplane aisles, and dozens of cheaper bags will do the job for a consultant still deciding whether the lifestyle sticks.

The Computer Bag

Many firms still issue a computer bag with the standard laptop, and upgrading is a personal call. A slim ballistic-nylon portfolio bag weighs about three pounds, survives everything and fits anywhere, while leather expandable versions carry far more at double the weight and tend to age poorly after a couple of years. Backpacks divide the generations. Most younger consultants carry them happily, while traditionalists find even the nicest backpack informal for a client site. Choose deliberately, because the bag stands next to you in every first impression.

Tech and the Rest of the Bag

The accessory list is endless, and the essentials are short: power cords and chargers, confirmed before every trip. Useful additions include a wall charger with two outlets for you and a grateful stranger, an accessory pouch that gives every cord a home, a keychain flash drive, a personal presentation clicker that sees weekly use, a wireless hotspot for airports without usable connectivity, headphones at any price point and location tags for the bags themselves. Security rules on batteries and liquids reward checking current guidance before flying.1

The comfort layer separates sustainable road warriors from burned-out ones. A good fountain pen brings small daily pleasure. Sunglasses get lost, so buy accordingly. Old-school shoe polish, a stain-remover pen for the shirt that life happens to, a sealed travel mug, ear plugs against loudly snoring hotel neighbors, an eye mask, a reading light for dim rooms, business cards, hotel slippers because bare feet and hotel carpet should never meet,

and a small pill box with pain reliever, stomach remedy, antihistamine and backup medications. Workout clothes and sneakers ride along optimistically. Items other travelers swear by, worth considering:

> a privacy screen against airplane onlookers, a battery phone case for those who accept the bulk and an external battery for days spanning multiple sites

Budgeting the Kit

New consultants often ask what a sensible first-year travel budget looks like. Front-load the two purchases that touch every trip, the roller bag and the computer bag, and economize everywhere else until experience reveals your personal needs. Accessories accumulate best through gradual replacement, upgrading the item that failed you last trip rather than buying a catalog on day one. Watch what fifth-year colleagues carry, because their bags represent hundreds of trips of natural selection. And treat the kit as a professional expense in your own mental accounting, since reliable gear that removes friction from sixty flights a year pays for itself in preserved energy and unmissed meetings.

Habits That Outlast the Gear

The kit matters less than the routines wrapped around it. Repack the bag the same evening you return, while missing items are still fresh in mind, and the next departure becomes a ten-minute exercise. Keep duplicate toiletries and chargers that live permanently in the bag, because sharing items with your home bathroom guarantees eventual forgetting. Photograph your packed bag once, so hotel-room repacking has a reference. Review the kit twice a year and remove anything untouched for three months, since bags accumulate weight the way calendars accumulate meetings. Veteran travelers converge on these habits because weekly travel punishes improvisation, and the energy saved on logistics belongs to the client work and to sleep.

The List and the Essentials

Create a packing list and leave it inside the bag permanently, where it catches forgotten toiletries at exactly the right moment. Charge the computer and phone the night before, and

stage them by the door, because leaving a power cord at home remains the definitive rookie move. Perspective arrives with experience:

> in reality you need five things, identification, a credit card, the computer, power cords and a cell phone

Everything else is comfort and craft, replaceable in any airport. Pack the five religiously, pack the rest thoughtfully and spend the saved attention on the client work the bag exists to serve.

- 1TSA

Summary

Consulting travel rewards ruthless simplicity: mix-and-match clothes, one durable roller bag, a slim computer bag and a small kit of comforts that make hotel weeks livable. Keep a packing list in the bag, charge devices by the door and remember the five essentials.