

Your Bag Has More Room Than You Think!

Over the years, I've tried to pack more efficiently each time I travel. And yet, when I get home, I notice a few items in my bag that I didn't use at all – so the next time they stay behind. Bit by bit, my bag would be little lighter, a little less full. But these were small, incremental changes. More recently, I decided to go for a more focused approach. Read on to see how much space and weight I saved by replacing some of the bulkier items in my duffle bag.



I started with the air mattress. I have never been picky about having a very thick mattress, so I figured I didn't need to worry about making any big sacrifices here. My previous mattress, the [Thermarest Prolite](#) (492g), was already quite small and light. After some research, I found a relatively new brand making incredibly compact and lightweight air mattresses. I chose the [Klymit Static V Ultralite SL](#). This mattress weighs just 331g, and rolls up to the size of a beer can. It's not self-inflating, so you have to blow it up all on your own. But the ingeniously designed pattern of intricate baffles means that it is fully inflated with only 10 breaths (or 7-8 if you have big lungs!). It provides very little heat insulation from the ground, so it wouldn't be ideal for cold weather. However I have used it down to zero degrees with no issues. I was surprised to find out that, if you inflate it just right, the Klymit is actually more comfortable than the Thermarest!



Next up was the sleeping bag. I have been using the same MEC Raven 0 degree bag (1,340g) for almost ten years. I always thought it was pretty small and light compared to my father's huge military-style green sleeping bag I used when camping as a little kid. I didn't know how much smaller a sleeping bag could get! I now have a [Marmot Phase 30](#) (558g), which weighs less than half as much, and packs down to the size of a 1L Nalgene water bottle.



The third and final item was the tent. Like most people on a tour, I use a two person tent. There is, however, a very wide range of tent sizes that are officially called "two person", so choose carefully! My previous tent was the [North Face Triarch 2](#) (2,047g), which is already reasonably small and light. It uses a very similar design to the more well-known MSR Hubba Hubba. I was interested when I heard that Big Agnes had released a new line of tents designed specifically for bikepacking. They are mostly the same as their standard tents, but with one key difference. The tent poles are built with significantly shorter sections, so that when folded, the entire tent package is short enough to fit within a drop handlebar. And of course, what makes these new tents more compact for bikepacking also makes them take up less room in a duffle bag! So I selected the [Big Agnes Fly Creek HV UL2 Bikepack](#) (1,436g). A very long name for a rather small package. It's about 600g lighter than the Triarch, and as you can see, significantly smaller when packed as well.

In total, these three changes have saved over 1.5kg of weight, and perhaps more importantly, have saved a huge amount of space – just see for yourself:



Now, each of these changes is a very personal choice. The examples given here are three of the more extreme options you could take to lighten your load. If you have a bad back, you may need a

different air mattress. If you easily get cold at night, you may want a warmer sleeping bag. And if, like me, you are six feet tall and struggle to fit head to toe in a tent, you may want a bigger tent! And that has been my choice. For any trip longer than a week or so, I still use the bigger tent. But I have no complaints using the new mattress and bag, and I definitely have no complaints about no longer needing to sit on my duffle bag to close the zipper every morning!