

BED BUG TRAVEL GUIDE

QUALITY
PEST CONTROL
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The purpose of this guide is to educate people who are traveling about bed bugs and how they can reduce the likelihood of staying in a bed bug infested environment.

BED BUG BASIC INFORMATION

To better understand how to prevent bringing bed bugs home with you, it is important to first understand some basic and background information.

Bed bugs are small, nocturnal insects that typically feed on the blood of their human hosts while they are sleeping. During the day, bed bugs are inactive and hide in cracks and crevices behind headboards, under or inside of box springs, as well as any other locations where they can remain virtually undetected. They feed only once every week or two. Between blood meals they remain well hidden in their nesting places until it is time to come out for another blood meal. They can survive up to one year without a blood meal in the absence of a host.

Bed Bugs don't exist naturally in the outdoor environment. As a result, in order for a structure to become infested, they have to be transported or imported from an already infested environment. They can be found in any indoor environment, regardless of social status or sanitary conditions.

Bed bugs are very difficult to detect. Their small size enables them to fit into spaces that a sheet of paper cannot even be slid into. Simply put, bed bugs are very difficult to detect.

A common misconception is that bed bugs can be detected by checking the edges and seams of a mattress. However, bed bug infestations are typically not observed on a mattress until infestations have been present for quite some time and have become well established. Often, infestations are present for several months or more before bed bugs are seen in obvious locations, such as the mattress. Instead, early infestations tend to be in more secluded environments, such as underneath, or even inside of box springs where they remain undisturbed and well hidden. As a result, populations are often not detected until they become well established.

LUGGAGE SELECTION

The type and style of luggage that you use during travel can help reduce the likelihood of bed bugs hitching a ride in or on your luggage. Hard smooth luggage is less attractive to bed bugs than luggage made of other materials, such as nylon or tweed. In addition, hard luggage does not offer folds, pockets and seams for bed bugs to hide in or under. Duffle bags or other bags that can withstand hot laundering are more desirable than fabric luggage made of rigid construction. While duffle bags may not reduce the likelihood of you bringing bed bugs home with you, they are more easily dealt with once you return home by immediately hot laundering and then drying in a hot dryer cycle, killing any bed bugs or eggs.

Prior to leaving for your trip, it is advisable to make sure that any pockets or zippers on your luggage are completely closed. During your travels, zippers and pockets should remain completely closed at all times when not being used.

PACKING

You want to pack a flashlight. You will need the flashlight to conduct a proper inspection of your accommodations. It is also a good idea to pack plastic bags that can be used to seal up items that you purchase while traveling to isolate items that may have become infested. On your return home, the contents of the bag can be safely removed from the bags and then the bags discarded outside in a trash receptacle. When laundering cloth bags or clothing, your best defense against bed bugs will be the use of your washing machine and dryer. Washing items in water temperatures of 140° or greater should destroy any live bed bugs as well as any eggs. If the water temperature is not high enough, drying at the hottest setting will typically provide temperatures high enough to destroy live bugs and eggs.

AT YOUR DESTINATION

As soon as you enter the room, place your luggage in the middle of the floor away from anything that could harbor bed bugs, such as furniture or walls. You should then conduct a thorough room inspection. During your inspection you are looking for things as shed skins, fecal spotting (blood spots) and live bugs. Your inspection of the room can be a very simple one or can become very involved, depending how much time and energy you want to invest. During the early stages of an infestation, bed bugs tend to infest areas behind headboards or within box springs first. In some cases, infestations of bed bugs become large enough that a detailed inspection of the room is unnecessary. In over-populated conditions, bed bugs will migrate to more obvious areas of the rooms such as baseboards and wall-ceiling junctions. Checking these areas first may save you the time and effort of a more detailed inspection.

1. Be sure to check the baseboards behind the bed, nightstands and dresser if possible. This inspection should only take a few minutes, and if any bed bugs are found in any of these areas, there is no need to inspect further.
2. Up to this point, if you have not seen any evidence of bed bugs you should remove all of the linens from the mattress and inspect the edges and seams. You are looking for any evidence which may include the actual bugs, shed skins or fecal spotting. (Blood spots) Bed bugs like to hide along the underside of edges so you need to look very carefully, paying particular attention to all four corners of the bed as well as any area where the mattress contacts a wall or where labels or handles are present. Note: The likelihood of encountering live bugs and eggs will begin to increase as you move to the lower side of the mattress and will continue to increase as you proceed to the box spring.
3. If a dust ruffle exists then you will need to inspect the seams and edges of the dust ruffle. Typically, this is one of the first places where you may be able to find bugs.
4. Next, inspect the upper edges of the box spring in the same manner as you did the mattress. Inspecting the box spring is a little bit different than the inspection for the mattress. You are looking for the same types of evidence but there are many more edges and folds of fabric for the bed bugs to hide.
5. If the headboard is screwed to the wall you should avoid removing it. If this is the case, simply inspect the edges for any visible evidence. If the headboard is not screwed to the wall, you can remove it by carefully sliding it directly upwards then away from the wall. Areas where screws or holes exist, as well as cracks, crevices, or voids on the back of the headboard should be carefully inspected.

If you still have not found any evidence of bed bugs, it is unlikely that an obvious infestation exists, and if one does, it is probably at a low level and may be difficult to detect. For this reason we are not recommending that you continue to inspect any further areas.

PACKING UP

1. Sort all of your belongings into piles based on wash loads, ie., whites or colors and make a separate pile for what you will be dry-cleaning.
2. Place each pile into its own heavy duty disposable bag. Tightly seal the bags. It is important that the bags do not have any holes or tears in them, for this reason heavy duty bags are recommended.
3. Place the bags in your luggage. Gifts or other personal items can be placed in air tight bags prior to packing them in your luggage. This will help prevent these items from becoming infested if any bugs are in the luggage and have gone undetected. On returning home, the items can be taken out and the bags discarded.
4. If traveling home by car, you should bag your luggage in heavy duty plastic bags prior to placing them in your vehicle.

RETURNING HOME

If you know or suspect that you have been exposed to bed bugs during your travel, you can follow the steps listed below.

1. Do not take your luggage inside your home. If possible, unpack your luggage in an area that is well lit and away from any furniture and sleeping areas.
2. Carry in the sealed bags you have filled with items you are going to launder. Empty items into hot water wash. Items should remain sealed in the bags until laundered.
3. When the items are put into the washing machine, take the used empty plastic bag and place it into a new plastic bag and seal it. Every empty bag will be placed into this one bag. Discard the bag when finished.
4. All items being laundered must be washed in a hot water cycle (Minimum 140°) and then placed in the dryer on the hottest cycle possible for at least 30 minutes or until items are dry.
5. Items that cannot be dried on the hottest setting should be bagged separately and taken to be dry-cleaned.
6. Inspect all items that could not be laundered, such as luggage, toiletries, gifts, etc. If items were stored in sealed plastic bags or containers prior to packing them in the luggage, the likelihood of them being infested is very low. As they are removed from the bags, the bags should be placed into another air tight bag for proper disposal.