

Bags, Cases & Carry-Ons

Photo Challenge
9th Sep 2026



Bags, Cases & Carry-Ons

A playful photographic challenge exploring the objects we carry, the stories they hold, and the humour hidden in everyday travel items.



Why Bags, Cases & Carry-Ons?

- Familiar objects
- Strong shapes and textures
- Built-in storytelling
- Humour and nostalgia
- Easy to photograph at home



The Spark

- A close-up of a suitcase lock & missing handle inspired this challenge.
- Humour + texture + story = a perfect photographic prompt.



What Counts as a Bag, Case or Carry-On?



- Cabin bags
- Small suitcases
- Backpacks
- Handbags
- Briefcases
- Camera bags
- Laptop bags
- Shopping bags
- Travel organisers
- Anything you carry things in



Photographic Approaches

- Close-ups
- Abstracts
- Textures
- Storytelling
- Humour
- Still life
- Documentary style



Mac

Details to Look For

- Handles, zips, locks
- Wheels and feet
- Stitching and seams
- Wear and tear
- Labels and tags
- Contents (optional)
- Shadows and reflections

Simple Indoor Setups

- Natural window light
- Neutral backgrounds
- Tabletop still life
- Side lighting for texture
- Black card for shadows



Humour & Wordplay

Examples:

- “Get a handle on this”
- “Packed and ready”
- “Carry-on chaos”
- “Lost and found”
- “Handle with care”



The 6 Categories

Participants may submit up to 4 images, one from each chosen category.

- Handles & Grips
- Locks, Zips & Fasteners
- Textures & Materials
- Wear, Tear & Age
- Travel Tags & Labels
- Inside the Bag



The challenges:

1. Handles & Grips

Focus on the parts you hold: handles, straps, grips and loops.
Look for shape, stitching, texture and signs of use.

2. Locks, Zips & Fasteners

Photograph the engineering: zip teeth, sliders, buckles, clasps, locks and clips.
Great for close-ups, symmetry and texture.

3. Textures & Materials

Explore surfaces: leather grain, canvas weave, plastic ridges, metal sheen, padding and mesh. Side lighting reveals texture beautifully.

4. Wear, Tear & Age

Capture the history: scuffs, scratches, faded fabric, frayed stitching, dents and polished patches. Every mark tells a story.

5. Travel Tags & Labels

Look for tags, stickers, labels, barcodes, branding or destination markers.
Perfect for storytelling and nostalgia.

6. Inside the Bag

Photograph the interior: compartments, pockets, lining, mesh, straps or contents.
Think “still life in a box”.



Submit **up to 4 images**,
one from each chosen
category:

***Please submit your
images via the***

[<< Link >>](#)

***by Sunday 20th Sept
2026***



How to
approach
the
challenges

Handles & Grips

Focus on the parts you hold: handles, straps, grips and loops. These areas are full of shape, stitching, texture and signs of use — perfect for close-up photography.

What to Photograph

- Leather handles with stitching or patina
- Plastic or metal grips with wear marks
- Straps folded, twisted or frayed
- Loops, buckles or attachment points
- Handles casting shadows on the bag surface

How to Approach It

- Frame the handle as the **main subject**
- Try a **top-down shot** for symmetry
- Use **side lighting** to reveal texture
- Move in close — fill the frame
- Keep backgrounds simple and neutral

Why It Works

Handles and grips are tactile and familiar. They show how a bag has been used, carried and cared for — often the most expressive part of the object.

Tips for Success

- Use natural window light
- Focus carefully on stitching or texture
- Lower exposure slightly for richer tones
- Try monochrome for a sculptural look
- Experiment with angles and shadows



Locks, Zips & Fasteners

Zips, locks, buckles and clips are full of **texture, symmetry, tiny details and wear**, making them ideal for close-up photography.

They're also wonderfully expressive: a jammed zip, a battered lock, a shiny new buckle — each one tells a story.

What to Photograph

- Zip teeth and sliders
- Padlocks, combination locks, TSA locks
- Buckles, clasps, clips and catches
- Magnetic fasteners
- Press-studs and poppers
- Worn or bent metal parts
- Fasteners casting shadows

How to Approach It

- Move in close — treat it like macro work
- Use **side lighting** to reveal texture and metal sheen
- Look for symmetry in zip teeth or lock shapes
- Keep backgrounds simple to avoid distraction
- Lower exposure slightly to avoid glare on metal

Why It Works

Fasteners combine **engineering and storytelling**. They show how a bag has been used, how often it's been opened, and how well it's been cared for.

They also offer strong shapes: lines, curves, rectangles, repeating patterns.

Creative Prompts

- Photograph a **broken zip** as gentle humour
- Capture the **wear** on a frequently used lock
- Use shadows to turn a clasp into an abstract shape
- Pair two fasteners for symmetry
- Try monochrome for a graphic, industrial feel

Tips for Success

- Use natural window light
- Avoid harsh reflections by adjusting angle
- Focus carefully on the mechanism
- Try both colour and monochrome
- Experiment with very tight crops



Textures & Materials

Explore the surface qualities of bags, cases and carry-ons. Look for grain, weave, sheen, softness, hardness and tiny details that reveal how an object *feels*.

What to Photograph

- Leather grain — smooth, cracked or polished
- Canvas or fabric weave
- Nylon ripstop patterns
- Plastic ridges or moulded shapes
- Metal surfaces — brushed or shiny
- Mesh pockets and netting
- Rubberised handles or grips
- Stitching, seams and edging

How to Approach It

- Use **side lighting** to reveal dips, ridges and grain
- Move in close — fill the frame with the surface
- Tilt the bag until the light catches the texture
- Keep backgrounds neutral
- Focus carefully on the most textured area
- Lower exposure slightly for richer tones

Why It Works

Textures add realism and depth. They turn everyday objects into abstract landscapes and reveal craftsmanship, wear and character. Works beautifully in both colour and monochrome.

Tips for Success

- Window light is ideal
- Avoid overhead lighting — it flattens texture
- Move the bag slowly until the light direction works
- Try both colour and monochrome
- Keep the frame simple and uncluttered



Wear, Tear & Age

Capture the history written into bags, cases and carry-ons. Scuffs, scratches, faded patches and frayed edges reveal how an object has been used, carried and cared for.

What to Photograph

- Scuffed corners
- Scratched or worn metal
- Faded fabric or colour loss
- Frayed stitching or loose threads
- Cracked leather
- Dented locks or buckles
- Polished patches from repeated handling

How to Approach It

- Use **side lighting** to reveal texture and damage
- Move in close — treat wear as a landscape
- Rotate the bag until marks catch the light
- Keep backgrounds simple
- Lower exposure slightly for richer shadows
- Focus carefully on the worn area

Why It Works

Wear and tear adds character and story. It reveals craftsmanship, travel, time and imperfection — often the most expressive part of a well-used bag.

Tips for Success

- Window light from the side is ideal
- Avoid overhead lighting — it flattens texture
- Move slowly until the wear becomes visible
- Try both colour and monochrome
- Keep the frame uncluttered



Travel Tags & Labels

Capture the markers of travel — tags, stickers, labels and barcodes that bags collect over time. Each one is a tiny time capsule: a clue to a journey, a destination, an airline or a memory.

What to Photograph

- Old airport tags
- Destination stickers
- Airline barcodes
- Handwritten luggage labels
- “Fragile” or “Priority” stickers
- Branded travel tags
- Vintage luggage labels
- Multiple tags layered over time

How to Approach It

- Use **gentle side lighting** to reveal creases and faded ink
- Move in close — tags reward detail
- Rotate the tag until the texture catches the light
- Keep backgrounds simple
- Lower exposure slightly to avoid blown highlights
- Include part of the bag for context if helpful

Why It Works

Tags and labels are full of narrative potential. They reveal journeys taken, wear and age, humour, colour, typography and personal history.

Tips for Success

- Window light from the side is ideal
- Focus carefully on printed or handwritten text
- Keep the frame simple
- Try both colour and monochrome
- Capture wear, folds and creases



Inside the Bag

Explore the interior world of bags, cases and carry-ons. Compartments, pockets, lining and contents create a ready-made still life — structured, personal and often surprising.

What to Photograph

- Compartments and dividers
- Mesh pockets and elastic straps
- Lining fabric, stitching and seams
- Organised or chaotic contents
- Books, cables, notebooks, travel items
- Hidden objects or surprises
- Shadows falling into the interior

How to Approach It

- Use **soft window light** to brighten the interior
- Open the bag fully to let light in
- Try **top-down** or **45-degree** angles for clarity
- Keep the frame tidy — avoid clutter outside the bag
- Tilt the bag until light reaches deeper pockets
- Focus carefully on the main compartment or item

Why It Works

The inside of a bag is personal, structured and full of story. It reveals habits, routines, materials and small details — often more interesting than the outside.

Tips for Success

- Window light from the side works best
- Avoid overhead lighting — it flattens detail
- Lower exposure slightly for richer tones
- Keep the frame simple and intentional
- Move items gently to improve composition



Conclusion

A fun, flexible challenge, encouraging creativity, humour, and close observation.

- Pick your categories.
- Explore your bags, cases and carry-ons.
- But most of all “Tell a story”.

