

Luggage

You can only bring one suitcase, plus your carry-on luggage. Most delegates bring the largest suitcase the airlines will allow, so they have room for the gifts they give and those they receive and purchase. When you know which airlines you will be traveling on, check their web site for size limits. Your weight limit is 50 pounds and the suitcase must have wheels, as you will be carrying it through airports and possibly on stairs. A suitcase which is heavy while empty can quickly become overweight, so try to find a durable lightweight bag which will still protect your items. Since you will only be gone a month, you might consider borrowing luggage.

Carry-ons cannot have wheels. They should be a backpack, small duffel and/or shoulder bag (with comfortable straps). Many delegates have two carry-ons, a larger one for the overhead bin carrying a change of clothes and other special items and a smaller one for under the airplane seat for books, snacks and to use as a "day bag" for carrying cameras, purchases, etc. when sightseeing with their host family. You will be using your larger carry-on for overnights in Tokyo and to take your clothes to the 3-4 day Labo Camp.

Traveling light is an art. Experienced travelers try to bring only the items they need. They will bring several small containers of shampoo rather than a large container, so they can throw away each container as they empty it. They will take purchases out of the bags and packaging. They will plan to leave certain items behind, such as half-full shampoo bottles, as they pack for the trip home. If their suitcase is too heavy, they put the books and other heavy items into their carry-on.

One way to maximize the room in your suitcase is to pack items in ziploc bags. There are many sizes, up to quite large (usually the larger ones are sold at home improvement stores). For example, put all your socks in one bag and squeeze the air out. The bags keep your items organized, protect them from anything which might leak, make it easier for TSA to search your luggage, and reduce wasted space in your suitcase.

Breakables and valuable items such as jewelry, watches, iPods, eyeglasses, prescription medications, money and cameras should be packed in your carry-on and not in your suitcase. If an item is particularly fragile or if it is breakable and isn't allowable in a carry-on, first pack it inside a small plastic

storage box or other sturdy container and pad it with paper, clothing, bubble wrap or styrofoam “peanuts”.

When you arrive in Portland, or wherever your departure city will be, you will get your suitcase at baggage claim and have access to your suitcase for your final overnight in the USA. You will re-check your bag the next day for the flight to Japan. Upon arrival in Japan, you will claim your bag and take it through Japan customs. After everyone has cleared customs, the suitcases will be taken to a shipping company at the airport and shipped directly to your host family. You will not have access to the suitcase during your overnight orientation in Tokyo. You will be reunited with it when you meet your host family. The reverse happens on the way home. Your suitcase will be picked up at your host home a few days before you leave Japan. It may be picked up before or while you are at Camp. You will not have access to it during your final overnight in Tokyo. You WILL see it again at the airport, so if your bag is under the weight limit, you will have time to throw a few extra items into your bag before check-in, such as last-minute purchases, your PJ's or items you can't carry on or won't need on the plane.

Remember to NEVER put your passport and money in your suitcase. It MUST be in your carry-on or in your passport holder, wallet or purse.

If you are not already enrolled in the Alaska Airlines AK49 and mileage programs, you may want to do that to earn miles and to save on luggage fees.