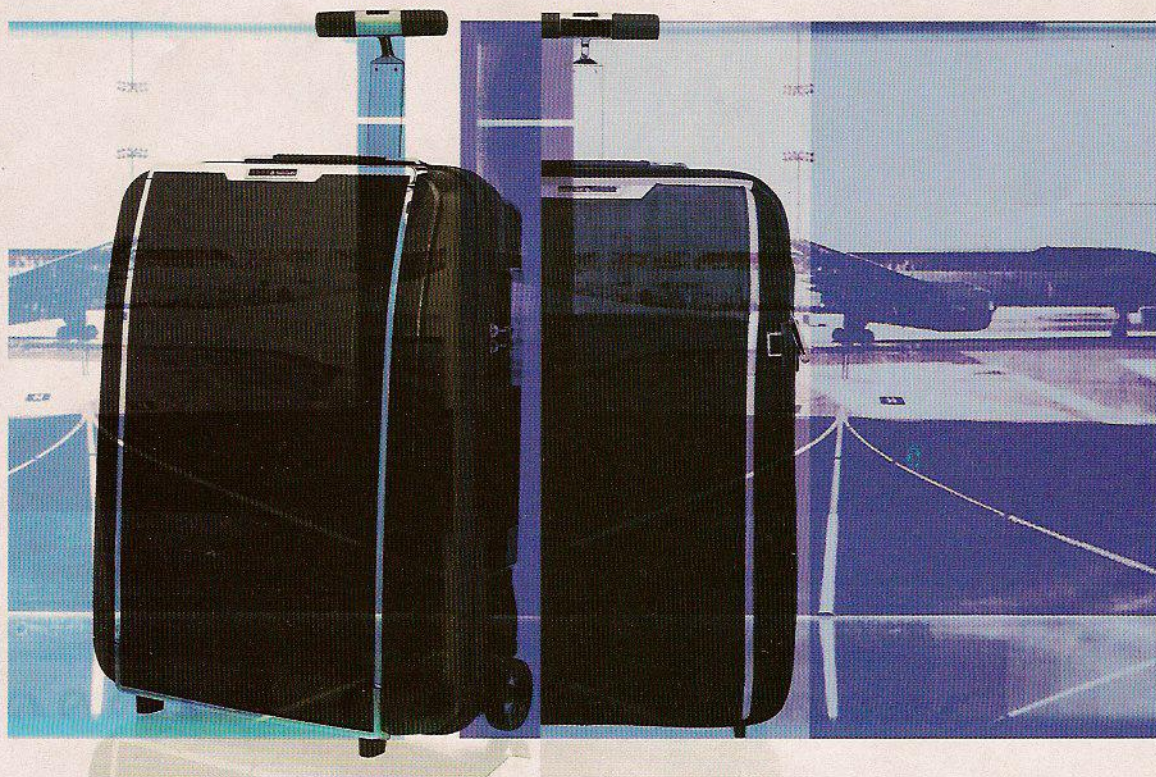




## IN GEAR

### TOOLS FOR WORK AND PLAY



### On a Roll

Does your luggage need to go on a diet? The average wheeled suitcase weighs more than 15 pounds empty. Add clothes, shoes, toiletries, and a few souvenirs, and it's easy to hit the 50-pound limit and have to pay a fine. Thankfully, several companies have developed lightweight rollers that are durable and roomy, yet weigh only half as much. On your next trip, grab one of the following above-average bags and you'll have more space to bring home gifts for loved ones.

#### The Most Versatile: Eagle Creek

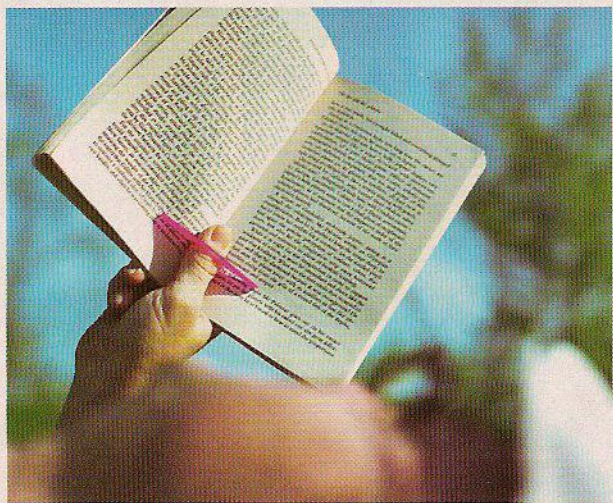
**Cross Roads 25** This eight-pound wonder is a backpack and wheeled suitcase in one, so you can roll through airports or platform hop at train stations with ease. Backpack straps and padded hipbelt zip away neatly behind a fabric panel. Convenient front

pockets are sized perfectly for a boarding pass and ID. And the side pockets can hold a cell phone, snacks, or a water bottle. Slightly oversized wheels make it easy to bump over cracked sidewalks and gravel parking lots. Exterior compression straps help you secure your belongings for any ride. Need a little extra room? The main compartment unzips to expand from 3750 to 4690 cubic inches (holds about a week's worth of clothing). Cross Roads 25 costs \$230. For more, visit [eaglecreek.com](http://eaglecreek.com).

#### Family Friendly: High Sierra A.T. Gear 26-Inch Wheeled Duffel

High Sierra is the official luggage supplier to the U.S. Ski Team, so you know their products can withstand frequent travel. This sporty, two-in-one backpack/rolling duffel is no exception. It uses inline skate wheels and corner protectors to help you navigate airports and sidewalks smoothly. The bag has molded-plastic protective feet on the bottom to keep it upright when you're not moving. Access your stuff in the main compartment through a U-shaped zippered opening. With enough room for up to five days of clothing, this bag tips the scales at eight pounds. Best of all, its bargain price (\$150) means you'll have money left over to book a ticket to the Bahamas. Check out [highsierrasport.com](http://highsierrasport.com).





### Jet-Set Style: Samsonite

**Black Label X'Lite Series** If you prefer the look and protection of hard-sided luggage but don't like the extra weight, try this new technology. X'Lite is the lightest and strongest Samsonite series ever, utilizing a new environmentally friendly material that's feather-light and resists cracks at a wide range of temperatures. The sleek, space-age look appeals to sophisticated business travelers who want their luggage to stand out from the rest. The X'Lite collection includes two- and four-wheeled uprights, hardside/softside hybrids, garment bags, duffels, backpacks, and messenger bags. Weights vary by size; the 22-inch upright hard-sided case is 9 pounds, 4 ounces. The bags are pricey (\$370–\$520), but they come with a lifetime warranty. Go on the Web to [samsonite.com](http://samsonite.com).

### Weekend Warrior: Mountainsmith

**Boarding Pass** This unique wheeler is easy to spot on a baggage carousel among the black look-alikes. Part hard suitcase and part soft, expanding duffel, the Boarding Pass holds two to three days' worth of essentials. Its large front storage pocket easily

swallows a sweatshirt or hardcover novel, while interior mesh pouches let you separate your dirty clothes from clean. It also meets FAA regulations for carry-on size. Plus, its modest weight (8.5 pounds) means you won't have to ask for help to hoist it into an overhead bin. Features include wheels, padded handles, side compression straps to stabilize loads, a durable water-resistant fabric, and a modest price (at \$160). For more, visit [mountainismith.com](http://mountainismith.com).

— by GINA DEMILLO WAGNER

### Thumbs Up

Airborne bibliophiles have long struggled to juggle a hefty tome and glass of vino in a confined space. Enter the **Thumb Thing**.

Made from molded plastic, this ingenious gadget slides onto the thumb like a ring and makes holding a book open with one hand easy as pie. The flat, wide blade sits crosswise against the page and allows a single thumb to exert far more pressure, relieving hand strain and stabilizing the entire reading endeavor. The Thumb Thing comes in four different hole sizes and can serve as a bookmark while not in