

How To Carry Your Cigars

When you take cigars with you on your travels, you need to protect them from physical damage, as well as from drying. Travel humidors are an ideal solution. Many are compact enough to easily slip into your briefcase or the small bag you take onboard aircraft (not that it's likely that you'll be allowed to smoke there). When buying a travel humidor, first make sure that it will accommodate cigars of the size and shape you prefer. Then check it for durability. No matter how careful you are, your travel humidor will get jostled quite a bit. Make sure that it has a hinge that will stand up to a bit of abuse and repeated openings. (If you're a frequent international flyer, you'll find yourself constantly opening the case for customs inspectors who are hunting for Cuban cigars.

One long "piano" hinge that runs the length of the humidor is generally better than two or more hinges. Also, check to be sure that the humidification unit will stay in place as you sprint for a taxi or jam your bag into an overhead compartment. Even if you don't travel a lot, you may still want a travel humidor. They are extremely convenient for setting up a temporary depot of cigars in another part of your home. They are also perfect for keeping a few cigars humidified during the transition from a store's humidor to your own.

Sometimes, however, even a travel humidor is too much. Then you may want to rely on tubos and cigar cases. Tubos -- cigars that come packed in tubes, which help them stay properly humidified after they are taken out of a humidor -- are a good one-at-a-time solution. You can also purchase elegant silver or wooden tubes that will keep individual cigars properly moisturized for up to 72 hours. The drawback is that you will need several such tubes to carry a day's supply. On top of that, your tailor will hate them: they tend to be bulky and heavy and, when placed in a pocket, they ruin the "drape" of a garment.

Often the answer is to carry an elegant leather cigar case, loaded with the cigars you hope to smoke that day, and return any that you don't smoke that day to the humidor each evening. If you always smoke the same kind of cigar, you can get a case that fits your cigars exactly -- with "fingers" of the right diameter, and with the ability to telescope, if you favor long cigars. Fingered cases offer the best protection because even a single cigar is held firmly in place and does not roll and bounce around within. If you smoke a varied selection, however, you will probably want to get an "open" case -- one without dividers or molded fingers -- which will accommodate a variety of sizes. When you buy a cigar case, wear the coat or jacket that has the smallest pockets of all the garments in your wardrobe.

Make sure that the case fits, and that you can live with the resulting bulge. Conversely, next time you go to have a suit, jacket or coat fitted, be sure to bring your cigar case. A good tailor will be able to adapt the garment so you can carry the case without looking as if you're packing a pistol. Also, when shopping for a case bring several cigars. (Or use the occasion as an excuse to buy a few.) The first test of any case is how well it fits your cigars. Load the case and see if the you can slip the cigars in and out with reasonable ease. Close the case, to make sure that it is not too short for your cigars. You'll want the case to be lined, so your cigars won't take on a leathery taste, and to prevent the tragedy of a fine cigar's wrapper snagging on rough, less-finished leather.

The thickness of the leather is a matter of personal preference. The thicker the leather, the greater the protection. But thicker leather also adds weight and bulk. Selecting the right cigar case can take a bit of time; there are more variables than you would expect. Cigar cases are made with the same craftsmanship as fine footwear, and they come in almost as many styles. Choose carefully. A fine cigar case is not only extremely functional, it is also an accessory that will distinguish you as a person of taste.