



VOLUME 11
ISSUE 3

IN THIS ISSUE

ARCHIVE



The weekender bag is the perfect companion for functionality and style

DANIEL CAPPELLO UNPACKS THE ENDURING APPEAL OF THE CLASSIC WEEKENDER BAG

When I was thirteen, a friend from Bordeaux came to stay with my family and me in New Jersey for a not-so-brief sojourn. Karine and I shared a love of learning and travel, as well as an adolescent smugness in considering ourselves experts in all things French, which, to us, meant "style"—although next to her I possessed little of it myself. So I was thrilled to unwrap her first present to me, trusting that anything she brought from France would have an innate vogueish credibility. Inside the unwieldy box was a folded-over weekend bag. It was a medium-to-large-size weekender in a rich color of Basque green, with bright orange lines running alongside the stitching and on the straps. It didn't quite fit in with my preppy American style; it was almost too obviously European, too daring in color, too fabulous in texture (a reinforced spinnaker canvas), too unique—too chic—but it was love at first sight.

What is it about a mere bag that can arouse such emotions? Women, I presume, understand this feeling more easily than men. When I notice a woman walking down the street with an oversize shoulder bag in an exotic skin, I can see the confidence in her step and in her straight back. Swap crocodile for canvas on that same woman, and suddenly her catwalk strut turns to a burdened workweek shuffle. I can relate to that. Whenever I used to pack my green-and-orange weekend bag, I felt somehow emboldened. Every trip I took with it became an experiment in testing the limits of the person I imagined I could grow into. I loved the shape it took when stuffed with my things, the satisfying zut-zut-zutting of the zipper—that metal tug against the reinforced shell—and the swishy sound that the spinnaker made whenever it rubbed against my jeans or jacket.



You'll know you've found your ideal weekend bag when it moves fluidly with you, like a perfect dance partner

When I packed for college in Boston, my natty bag came along with me. I can still picture it slung over my navy peacoat, making the trip on Amtrak rides up and down the Northeast corridor, shuttling between musty dorm rooms and fancy Manhattan apartments, final exams and first loves, lugging tattered volumes of Milton and Mills. It had grown worn in parts, faded in the corners, and thinner in the shoulder strap, but it was always there.

Because of my weekender, I never quite cared much for larger pieces of luggage—the bulky size, the hard casing, the rigid form, and, most offensive of all, the wheels! Packing a suitcase felt like locking into something definitive, while packing my green bag felt suggestive—of escape, or possibility, of picking up and going without any need for notice. I couldn't, however, avoid bona fide luggage forever. At some point between trips to Princeton from Harvard, I parted ways with that first true French staple of my wardrobe. I knew that when I was a man, I'd have to carry a man's bag, and forget my more youthful fancies and the freedoms they bespoke. Soon after college I landed a job in Paris and needed to pack at least a year's worth of life into suitcases. My mother offered to buy me a set of luggage as a farewell gift, so off we went to tanneries and department stores. But nothing was very much to my liking—too severe, too flimsy, too touristy. My mother, to-the-point as ever, walked over to a set of five sensible, plain black cubes and lozenges, unzipped them, wheeled them about, tested them on her arm, put down her credit card, and said, "We'll take them."

Leaving the country was not as simple. After pleading in earnest schoolboy French at the Air France counter for the discounted admission of my entourage of bags, I arrived at my new workplace on the tony, tree-lined avenue (Georges Mandel, where my bags occupied nearly half of the marble foyer. The secretaries huddled around to scope out the new young American guy, snickering and pointing. "Look! And of course they all match," one of them said before they retreated to the espresso machine, leaving me summarily shamed.

During that year in Paris, I traveled almost every weekend—Madrid, Barcelona, London, Rome, Stockholm, Milan, Biarritz, Cannes—toting the weekend bag from my brand-new collection: a sleek, compact nylon rectangular zip that was steadfast and reliable, if utterly lacking in character. And perhaps that was the problem: There was nothing more suspicious to European security guards than an unshaven man traveling alone with a small, anonymous black bag. I missed my fashionable weekend bag back home, tattered as it was.



A leather weekend bag can handle wear and tear gracefully, only becoming more distinguished with age

I thought I would never be able to replace my Basque green beauty, but after moving back stateside, I eventually stumbled on a tasteful tan bag in oil-finish twill, with a leather shoulder strap suggestive of dressage reins. When I saw it, I knew this was the weekend bag for me. It is manly and athletic, yet refined and still sturdy. It can take a beating and shrug it off; in fact, with wear and aging, it only looks more distinguished. It's the kind of bag that's designed to carry more than its weight in contents yet still look worthy of a gentleman. There is the lightness of step it brings simply by dint of design: Its size dictates that I pack only the bare essentials, and I've come to learn that I probably won't miss anything that won't fit inside. Moreover, it's the perfect proportions for my body, a fit as elusive as a perfect dance partner who allows your arms, torso, and movement to fluidly work together. No matter where I take it, my bag gives me a confidence summed up by my memory of landing in Los Angeles, bypassing baggage claim, and slinging my sole encumbrance into the backseat of a white Mustang convertible bound for a friend's ranch in the Santa Ynez Valley.

My faithful companion has accompanied me on trips to the beach house and the Berkshires, to Houston and San Francisco, up the Spanish Steps in Rome and down a steep Acapulco hillside, surviving stowage in buses, planes, and gym lockers. At home I like to keep my bag propped up in a corner of my bedroom. Its color, its masculine lines, and its leather straps and hauls waxing slightly pink along the worn edges make for a decorative piece all their own. Much like the collection of sterling-framed photographs that I wake to each morning, my bag is an evocative entrée into my past. It beckons, it calls, it reminds me of where I've been—and where I have yet to go.

Daniel Cappello is the fashion editor of Quest Media, which publishes Quest and Q magazines.

1. Robyn Mackenzie
2. Bruce Weber/Arnoldo Anaya
3. David Sanger

E-MAIL PRINT SHARE

UNITED STATES Change Country

CUSTOMER ASSISTANCE

Customer Assistance
Email Us
Payment Methods
Tel 888-475-7674

SHIPPING & RETURNS

Track My Orders / Returns
Shipping Rates
Returns & Exchanges
US Shipping Only

COMPANY INFORMATION

Store Locator
About Ralph Lauren
Careers
California Transparency Act

RECEIVE RALPH LAUREN EMAIL UPDATES

YOUR EMAIL
[Click here to read Ralph Lauren's Privacy Notice](#)