

# Bed Bugs: Souvenirs to Avoid When Traveling

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Above: adult bed bug with eggs (magnified). Right: adult bed bug from above and side (actual size)



Cast skins



Fecal stains look like black ink spots.

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Signs of bed bugs include mysterious bites, live or dead bugs, cast skins, blood stains, fecal stains and eggs.

## What Does a Bed Bug Look Like?

Bed bugs can be a variety of shapes and sizes, young bugs can be as tiny as a poppy seed and adult bed bugs can be comparable to an apple seed. They range from a light to reddish brown when hungry, to a deep, red color when full of blood.

## What Do Bed Bug Bites Look Like?

It is impossible to identify a pest based on a bite alone. Everyone has an immune system that reacts differently to a stimulus whether it's an insect bite, sting or an environmental allergen. Reactions can be immediate, delayed, localized or spread throughout the body like hives. Typical skin reactions are red

and inflamed bumps near the site of the bite(s), but reactions can range from severe, requiring medical attention, to experiencing no reaction at all.

## Do Bed Bugs Spread Diseases?

Bed bugs do not transmit any diseases to humans. Their bites are more of an annoyance, especially for individuals who suffer a negative reaction to the compounds, like the anesthetic they inject before feeding.

## What Should I Do With My Luggage at a Hotel?

Refrain from putting luggage on the bed or floor. If using the luggage holder, pull away from the wall and inspect for signs of bed bugs. Luggage can also be placed on the bathroom counter or in the bath tub, which is a hard surface, further away from the bed. If possible, keep clothing out of dresser drawers and luggage zipped when not in use.

Bag and isolate dirty laundry rather than creating piles on the floor. In a recent study, scientists found that

bed bugs were attracted to the scent of humans and preferred dirty clothes compared to clean clothing.

## How and Where Do I Check My Hotel Room for Bed Bugs?

Check the places that are unlikely to be disturbed by patrons and the housekeeping staff. This would include the box spring (pull back the fitted sheets and look at the seams, corners, folds), joints

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Use bright flashlight to inspect the mattress, look closely along the folds, stitching, piping and corner guards for signs of bed bugs.

of the bed frame and nightstand.

If you find a bed bug, collect it and take it to the front desk. They should have a protocol to follow, which should include moving you and your family to a different room.

### **What Precautions Can I Take Upon Returning Home?**

- Inspect luggage for bed bugs.
- Unpack bags outside or in the garage.
- Take clothes directly to the washing machine to be washed and dried or dry items on high (120°F for 20–30 minutes).
- Small items can be bagged and placed in freezer (0°F for 4 days).
- Inspect hard items (i.e. toiletries) before bringing them inside.
- Regularly vacuum floors and upholstered furniture.

Store luggage away from the bedroom in the garage or basement

storage. This increases the distance from the point of introduction to the host-resting area therefore decreasing the chance a wandering bed bug will survive to feed.

### **What Do I Do if I Find Bed Bugs at My Home?**

If you find bed bugs or see signs of bed bugs in your home, do not panic! Do not throw away your mattress and all your belongings! Do not consider leaving your home in hopes they will starve without you. Bed bugs can live several months without a blood meal, so it's best to stop bed bugs before they spread. Some things to consider:

- 1) Find the source (consider circumstances of recent travel, acquiring used furniture, hosting grandchildren, college students and other visitors).
- 2) Stop the spread to other places and people.
- 3) Treat infested areas.

4) Prevent reinfestations of new bed bugs.

5) Continue to monitor and be vigilant.

### **How Do I Choose a Pest Control Company?**

Consider contacting a professional pest management company. Both chemical treatment and heat treatment can be expensive (approximately \$200–\$500), but if you have a high-level infestation and try to treat yourself, you may end up spending just as much money, if not more, and still not be successful at eliminating the bed bugs.

Take the time to get your questions answered by the pest control provider, call multiple companies to compare treatment details, number of visits, possible guarantees and your preparation instructions. Due to the risks associated with pesticide use, it is not recommended to perform a treatment prior to the confirmation of bed bugs.