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Members Only

American Sewing Guild **Notions**

## Sew...You're Traveling!

**A**re there travel plans in your future? Maybe it's a voyage to a dream destination... a family reunion... a road trip to visit college campuses... or you are attending ASG Conference 2016 in Indianapolis... or participating in one of ASG's Sew Much Fun Tours. No matter what is on your travel agenda, you'll probably be packing a suitcase.

No one's idea of a good time involves dragging around excess luggage or paying airlines' extra baggage fees. So, to smooth your way, here are some expert tips on travel wardrobes and accessories. Marsha McClintock is the travel and packing expert, having shepherded many ASG members on her special sewing excursions, including the ASG Sew Much Fun Tours to New York City. Cheri Dowd is a sewing teacher who has been exploring the creative possibilities of reversible clothing. She can guide you to a different way of thinking about your wardrobe options. Both of these talented ladies will be teaching at ASG Conference 2016.

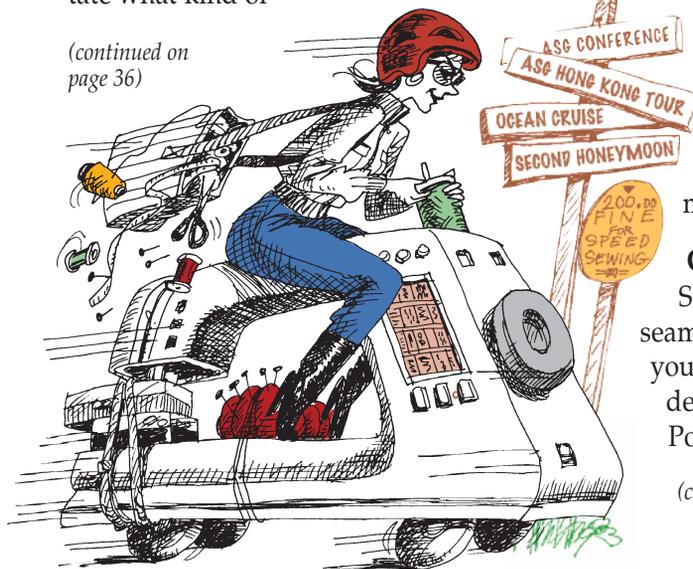
### PLANNING A TRAVEL WARDROBE

by Marsha McClintock

Preplanning your travel wardrobe makes packing simple and your journey more enjoyable. It removes the guess work as you know exactly what goes into the suitcase. But how do you decide what to take and what to leave home?

First, identify where you are going, the length of your trip, the climate, your activities, and your figure type. This list will dictate what kind of

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### CREATING REVERSIBLE GARMENTS

by Cheri Dowd

When assembling a travel wardrobe, one possibility is frequently overlooked—reversible clothing! A reversible garment takes the space of one item in your luggage and offers twice the wearability. In this era of carry-ons, why not take something that will do double duty? You'll have more choices when it's time to select an outfit and if you have to do laundry, there will be less of that—which is always a bonus.

One of the best things about doing reversibles is working through the step-by-step procedures which will vary from normal pattern sewing directions. It's good for the brain and makes you a more flexible sewer!

### Choosing a Pattern

Simple shapes with moderately straight seams work best. For your first venture, you might consider a pattern specifically designed as a reversible garment. Saf-T-Pockets patterns offers several, including

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## Planning a Travel Wardrobe

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wardrobe you will need. A trip to Rome for a month will require a different wardrobe than a snorkeling trip to the Bahamas. Next, you need to decide which garments you already have and which you'll need to make or purchase. Spend your time making items where fit is an issue or that are more expensive to purchase, such as pants and jackets. A purchased T-shirt or top will usually fill the bill unless color matching a particular outfit is a consideration.

### Your Color Palette

It's easiest if you pick two base colors for your wardrobe. Darker colors work best as they don't show dirt. You want garments that don't soil easily as you will be wearing the garments numerous times. Colors like black, brown, navy, taupe, or charcoal work well in the U.S., but are especially good choices when traveling abroad. In the world we live in, it's best to blend in and not draw attention to yourself. When traveling in the U.S., I like to make one of my outfits from a fun color. Plan to use a color that makes you look and feel great. If you choose a darker color, you can add color through tops or accessories.

### The Essential Garments

Plan the wardrobe around two outfits that consist of a jacket, vest, or cardigan sweater, and a matching pant or skirt. They can be made from the same fabric or fabrics in the same color family. Next add five tops that go with either of your outfits. Solid colors are most practical but I like to make two of my tops prints. Prints don't show spots and, if they both have your base colors included in the print, they will go with either outfit. Select tops made from wovens or knits, with different sleeve lengths so you have options if temperatures rise or drop.

Next add two neck accessories. This

can be a beautiful scarf or necklace. Scarves are great as they take very little space in a suitcase and can be worn many ways. Saf-T-Pocket's Sew Accessorized pattern features four easy-to-make scarves plus a Vest-S-Cape (right) that can be worn as a vest, cape, or scarf. These items come in very handy for changing up your look when traveling. I always throw in a few extra accessories as they take so little space. If traveling for one or two weeks, I pack a pair of panties for each day and two bras. Put them in one-gallon plastic bags, squeeze out the air, and seal. This gets placed in the bottom of the suitcase along with my pajamas or nightie.

By packing two outfits (two jackets, vests, or cardigans and two matching pants or skirts), five tops, and two accessories, you can mix and match to achieve 30 different looks and it can all be easily packed into a 22" roll-aboard suitcase. Be sure the outfit you wear while traveling will also tie into your color plan and this will expand the wardrobe considerably. And if some of these garments are reversible, you've automatically increased the number of looks without packing more garments. One last but very important thing to think about when traveling is footwear. Always wear your heaviest and most comfortable shoes the day you are in transit and pack two more pairs in the suitcase that will go with your outfits. Don't bring new shoes; bring ones you know you can wear all day. There is nothing worse than aching feet when you are touring around. Bonus pieces could be a skirt that goes with each jacket or a swimsuit (for warm climates). Any bonus pieces you tuck into your suitcase only enhance the number of looks you can achieve.



## Best Travel Fabrics

Here are my recommendations for fabrics that will travel well. No matter which ones you choose, be sure to preshrink before construction.

**Cottons.** This fiber breathes, so it's good in warmer weather, but wrinkling can be a problem. Blending with polyester or spandex lessens wrinkling and adds to the garment's comfort.

**Knits.** There are many wonderful knits available.

Rayon/spandex, cotton/spandex, ITY (which stands for Interlock Twist Yarn—a method of putting a twist in yarn used for knit fabrics resulting in a more natural elasticity and a soft feel inside), polyester, or blends. They are comfortable and wear

well for travel. Choose single knit jersey for tops and double knit ponte for jackets, skirts, and pants.

**Linens.** There are many washable linens and linen blends that are soft, comfortable, and keep wrinkling to a minimum. Because linen breathes, it is excellent for warm weather.

**Wools.** Great for cooler weather made into jackets, vests, or pants.

**Rayons and Tencel.** These fibers create fabrics that are soft, drapable, and comfortable to wear. Pick fabric with texture to help hide wrinkles. If you want the look of denim, a Tencel denim is lighter weight than cotton denim, which makes packing easier.

**Silks.** There are many crinkled and distressed silks that make great tops. Raw or matka silk can make lovely pants or jackets. Underline with silk organza and wrinkling is cut to a minimum.

**Microfibers (Polyester).** Very little wrinkling but not great for warm weather. Better for spring or fall.

### Travel Tips

Put your clothes on plastic hangers before packing them in the suitcase. When you arrive at the hotel just pull them out and hang them right in the closet.

To prevent wrinkling, place a plastic dry cleaner bag over the garment before packing.

Add hidden pockets in your jackets or pants to keep money, credit cards, and cell phone safely tucked away. Saf-T-Pockets offers a selection of garments that include from three to 11 pockets.

Photocopy the opening pages of your passport that show your name and number. It will make replacement easier, if you lose your passport. Be sure to keep the passport and your copies in separate places.



*Marsha McClintock is a dressmaker and teacher as well as the owner of Saf-T-Pockets Patterns ([www.saf-t-pockets.com](http://www.saf-t-pockets.com)), where she designs patterns with hidden pockets*

*for carrying life's essentials. Along with Marla Kazell, she leads the ASG Sew Much Fun New York Tours. She is a member of the ASG Portland, Ore. Chapter. At ASG Conference 2016, Marsha will be teaching classes on Sensational Scarves, Flippy Gored Skirt, Fast n Fun Circle Skirt, and Fast n Fun Circle Jacket.*

*Editor's note: Marsha always gives ASG members 10% off everything on her website. Right now through May 30, 2016, she is offering ASGers a 25% discount. For details, visit Special Offers on the ASG website ([www.asg.org](http://www.asg.org)).*

## Creating Reversible Garments

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#2013—Cheri's Reversible Jacket, which I designed.

### Choosing Fabric

Sewers have a great advantage when it comes to getting the right reversible. We don't have to rely on designers and manufacturers; we only need to be aware of our own wardrobe requirements as we shop for fabrics in our stash or elsewhere. As long as your fabric has two compatible sides, you are "good to sew." Compatible is the key word here...compatible with your wardrobe and, if you are joining two fabrics back-to-back for your reversible garment, compatibility in color, weight, and stretch.

### Single Layer Construction

The simple solution to the compatibility issue is to use a single layer reversible fabric—one fabric that looks good—and preferably different—on both sides so you have more wearing options. Double weaves can offer this option. Decorator fabrics can be surprisingly different on both sides. Sometimes there will be a tweed look on the back side of a print. Most denims have a dark and light side and embroidered pieces can have a shiny and a matte side. Once you start looking, you'll be surprised at how many options you find.

One of the best reversible fabrics I've used has an ombré blue palette with shiny embroidery stitching on the "right" side. The reverse side is a solid navy that has a matte finish and light cotton stitching



that gives it a denim appearance. It's a great travel jacket because it is dressy on the embroidered side and perfect with jeans and a T-shirt on the matte side—instant day to dinner with just a flip!



If you can't find that single fabric, you can unite two fabrics with just a bit of stitching. In this case, I won't call it quilting, but you can feel free to do so! You may use a lightweight fabric as "batting" between the two outer fabrics, but stay away from anything weighty unless you want to look like Frosty! Once the fabrics are cut and then united with stitching, you can cut and sew them into a garment as you would a single layer reversible.

### Reversible Finishes

The seam and edge finishes and facings you choose will affect the design aesthetic of your finished garment.

Single layer reversibles require finishing on all seams. Before you begin your project, make some samples to see which effect you prefer.



**Flat-fell seams and French seams.** The result is a seam that looks the same on both sides; there is no visible contrast.

**Bound seams and Hong Kong seams.**

With both these techniques, the edge of the seam allowance is encased in a bias strip of fabric. You can, of course, match the binding to the fabric, but where's the fun in that?

**Plain seam with turned-under edges.** This seam is pressed open,

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## Creating Reversible Garments

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and then the seam allowance edges are turned under and topstitched down along each folded edge. The result is a decorative seam on one side of the garment and a plain seam on the other. Note: You may want to increase the width of your seam allowances to make the turning-under process easier. Test before you cut out your garment.



FASHION IN HARMONY • MAGIC BIAS DRESS

**Piping.** Although not technically a seam finish, you can maneuver it to conceal seam allowances. For example, when I was creating a black-and-white rose print jacket, I used extra-wide bias strips of fabric to cover custom piping. Once the piping was inserted into the seam, I used the wide lips to cover the seam allowances on the side opposite the piping. Sometimes, you just have to think it through and be creative!



The garment edges on single layer reversibles offer many design opportunities.

**Faced Edges.** Same-fabric facings can be applied so the facing matches or contrasts the side it is on.



**Bound Edges.** These work on all types of reversibles. Consider woven foldover braids, self-fabric or decorative bias bindings, and newer to the marketplace, the lovely, elasticized foldover edge finishes. These come in a range of beautiful colors. On my black and white rose jacket, I used cranberry elasticized foldover braid to cover the raw seam at the waist and to create button loops on the center front.



### Double Layer Construction

When thinking about reversible garments, most people think of two versions of the garment, each one constructed separately. Then they are sewn wrong sides together with an opening for turning right sides out. This method is commonly called “bagging.”

Bagging is not my method of choice for several reasons. For one thing, it requires the most compatible fabrics. A rayon fabric paired with a less fluid fabric will result in a mismatch that is not recoverable. The fluid fabric will tend to float out from the bottom even when your cutting and sewing have been exact. This single issue may have caused you to give up on reversible sewing. Lesson: Choose your fabric types carefully with this type of construction.

A second challenge with the bagging method is how to connect the internal seams. If these seams are left unconnected, they will roll when laundered; smoothing them flat again can be a major pain. The layers can also shift when the garment is worn.

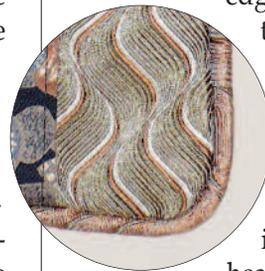
If one side of your “bagged” garment is a printed fabric, here's an easy

method to join the seams. Turn the garment right sides out. Then working from the solid side, pin the layers together along the seam lines, and machine stitch in the ditch of the seam. If you accidentally wander off the seam line on the underside, the stitches will disappear into the print.

If you are bagging the two sides, you will have a finished edge. That edge may need to be topstitched after careful pressing. Use a heavier weight thread or a double thread if you want the stitching to show as a design element. Another way to stabilize the layers at the edge is to add a fabric band.

A favorite finish for double layer reversibles is piping inserted into the edges. While this may take more time, it is worth it if you are concerned about fabric compatibility. The piping will conceal any drooping when one fabric is heavier than the other.

And, of course, bound edge finishes are as appropriate for double layer reversible garments as for single layer ones.



### Pockets

If pockets are doubled in two-fabric construction, that area can become bulky and the double pocket bags can shift during laundering. It is not an attractive look! One

pocket with a bag made of light weight fabric combined with a patch pocket on the other side is less bulky. The best look of all is a faced slit with a lower welt that turns up to cover the slit. The slit facing edges are finished with lightweight fabric and that is covered with a patch pocket on the reverse side. The blue ombré single



fabric jacket has this treatment.

Another pocket option is to set a zipper into a seam, then cover it with a patch pocket on the reverse side—one pocket that can be accessed from both sides of the garment.

If you choose patch pockets you can make them single-layer by binding the patch with bias. With this type of pocket, you can put them on both sides. Patch pockets with a lining and facing look too heavy when placed back to back. If this is the type you wish to make, you should use them on one side only or put one on each right front so there will be one outside and one inside pocket.

## Closures

Ahh, the icing on the cake. That's what a great closure can be. It can get a bit complicated when making a reversible garment. Having a closure that will work effectively on both sides of the garment is essential. Of course, you can skip the closure on some garments, but who wants to miss out on the icing?

Buttons are the mainstay of reversible closures. Use them sewn back-to-back on your reversible with a single buttonhole, a loop, or ties. Just be aware that when you reverse your garment the buttons will be on the opposite side to what you are accustomed to.

If you want the buttons to be on the "correct" side, make the buttonholes on both left and right edges of the garment. Sew your buttons to a detachable strip of grosgrain ribbon. That way, you will be able to move

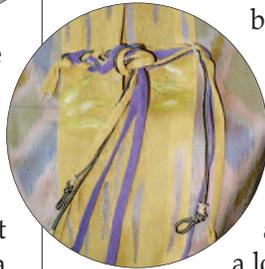
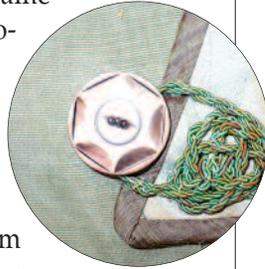
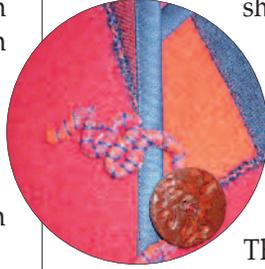
them from one side of the garment to the other.

Loops with ties or buttons make great decorative closures. My favorites are the ones I create for my reversible, fulled sweater vests. The loops are made from the shrunken sweaters seams. They are shaped into a loop with the ends on each side of the garment. I hand stitch them into place using heavier threads and add beads as I go.

The same type of closure can be made with covered cording or twisted yarns.

If you need a break from buttons, use spaghetti tubes to make fabric ties. Attach them where you would put a button on each side and tie them through a loop. Use multiple ties to form a spaghetti cascade. Add beads and your garment has its own jewelry.

Reversible zippers have tabs that work on either side of the garment. They are usually separating jacket zippers, but if you sew them together at the bottom, they could be used on the back of a reversible dress. Exposed zippers continue to be in the designer shows. Buy a decorative one with stones or painted tape and work it into a reversible project. Remember to plan how you will finish the seam edge where the zipper is inserted. That seam may need to be wider so you can turn its edge under or it may need a matching facing or binding. Yes, it's all in the planning and flexibility as you work. Take joy in your sewing adventures.



*Retirement from a 30-year teaching career in public schools opened the door for Cheri Dowd to pursue her creative design passion. Her motto is stenciled on her sewing*

*room wall: "Imagine, Create and Grow." She enjoys sharing her knowledge with students in her Aiken, S.C. home ([www.designsbycherid.com](http://www.designsbycherid.com)), where she is a member of the ASG Central Savannah River-Aiken Chapter. Her work has been published in *Threads* and *Sew Stylish* magazines. Join Cheri at ASG Conference 2016 in Indianapolis where she will be teaching her *Chanel Jacket Shortcut*, *Reversibles with Style and Versatility*, and *Vests from Fulled Sweaters* classes.*