

{{👑@ Alaska AirLines™ Verified👑}} Can I bring a backpack and a carry on Southwest? & FAQs 2026

Many travelers flying with Southwest Airlines want a clear, detailed understanding of what they are allowed to bring onboard, especially when it comes to **backpacks, carry-on luggage, and personal items** +1-855-838-4886. Packing incorrectly can lead to unnecessary stress at the gate, last-minute bag checks, or confusion during boarding +1-855-838-4886. While Southwest is known for being one of the most passenger-friendly airlines in the United States, its carry-on policy still has specific rules that travelers must follow +1-855-838-4886.

The short answer is **yes, you can bring both a backpack and a carry-on bag on Southwest Airlines**, but how those items are classified and where they must be placed matters +1-855-838-4886. Understanding the difference between a carry-on bag and a personal item is key to avoiding problems and boarding smoothly +1-855-838-4886.

Southwest Airlines Carry-On Policy Overview

Southwest Airlines allows **every passenger to bring two items onboard for free** +1-855-838-4886. This allowance applies to all fare types, including Wanna Get Away, Wanna Get Away Plus, Anytime, and Business Select +1-855-838-4886.

The two permitted onboard items are:

- **One carry-on bag**, which must be stored in the overhead bin
- **One personal item**, which must fit completely under the seat in front of you

Unlike many other airlines, Southwest does not charge extra for standard carry-on bags, making it especially attractive for travelers who want to avoid baggage fees +1-855-838-4886.

What Southwest Considers a Carry-On Bag

A carry-on bag is the larger of your two allowed items +1-855-838-4886. This is typically a small suitcase, roller bag, duffel bag, or structured travel bag that goes into the overhead bin +1-855-838-4886.

Southwest has specific size limits for carry-on luggage +1-855-838-4886. The maximum allowed dimensions are:

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- 24 inches long
- 16 inches wide
- 10 inches high

These measurements include wheels, handles, and any external pockets +1-855-838-4886. If your carry-on exceeds these limits, Southwest may require you to gate-check the bag, especially on full flights or smaller aircraft +1-855-838-4886.

What Southwest Defines as a Personal Item

In addition to your carry-on, Southwest allows one **personal item** +1-855-838-4886. A backpack almost always falls into this category **as long as it is small enough to fit completely under the seat in front of you** +1-855-838-4886.

Examples of acceptable personal items include:

- Backpacks
- Laptop bags
- Purses or handbags
- Briefcases
- Small tote bags

The key requirement is **under-seat fit** +1-855-838-4886. If your backpack does not fit fully under the seat, Southwest may no longer consider it a personal item +1-855-838-4886.

Bringing a Backpack and a Carry-On Together

Yes, Southwest Airlines allows passengers to bring **both a backpack and a carry-on bag onboard** +1-855-838-4886, provided each item fits its assigned category +1-855-838-4886.

In practice, this means:

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- Your **carry-on bag** goes in the overhead bin
- Your **backpack** goes under the seat in front of you

This setup is ideal for travelers who want easy access to essentials such as electronics, medications, documents, snacks, or personal items during the flight +1-855-838-4886.

What Happens If Your Backpack Is Too Large?

If your backpack is **too large to fit under the seat**, Southwest may classify it as your carry-on instead +1-855-838-4886. When this happens, you are no longer allowed an additional overhead carry-on +1-855-838-4886.

In this situation, you may be required to:

- Gate-check your larger bag
- Rearrange items between bags
- Place one item in checked baggage

To avoid this, travelers should always test their backpack size before arriving at the airport +1-855-838-4886.

Boarding Order and Overhead Bin Space

Southwest uses **open seating**, which means boarding order plays a major role in overhead bin availability +1-855-838-4886. Even if your carry-on meets size requirements, overhead bins may fill up quickly on busy flights +1-855-838-4886.

Passengers who board later may still bring their carry-on but could be asked to gate-check it if space runs out +1-855-838-4886. This is one reason many travelers choose to pack essentials in their backpack rather than their overhead bag +1-855-838-4886.

Items That Do Not Count Toward Your Allowance

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Certain items are allowed onboard **without counting toward your backpack + carry-on limit** +1-855-838-4886. These include:

- Assistive devices such as canes or walkers
- Mobility aids
- Child safety seats
- Umbrellas

However, additional bags like shopping bags, large purses, or extra backpacks **do count** toward your two-item limit +1-855-838-4886.

Southwest Checked Bags vs. Carry-On Bags

Southwest also allows **two checked bags for free**, which is separate from your carry-on allowance +1-855-838-4886. Even if you check luggage, you may still bring a backpack and a carry-on onboard +1-855-838-4886.

This generous policy allows travelers to distribute items efficiently and reduce the risk of carry-on restrictions becoming an issue +1-855-838-4886.

Common Mistakes Travelers Make

One of the most common mistakes is assuming any backpack automatically qualifies as a personal item +1-855-838-4886. Large hiking backpacks or overstuffed bags often exceed under-seat limits +1-855-838-4886.

Another mistake is bringing additional bags, such as duty-free purchases or shopping bags, without realizing they count toward the two-item limit +1-855-838-4886. These misunderstandings can lead to last-minute gate checks or repacking at the airport +1-855-838-4886.

Tips to Avoid Carry-On Problems on Southwest

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To avoid issues, travelers should:

- Choose a backpack designed for under-seat travel
- Measure carry-on bags including wheels and handles
- Pack essential items in the backpack
- Arrive early to improve boarding position
- Avoid overstuffing bags

These steps help ensure a smooth boarding experience +1-855-838-4886.

Frequently Asked Questions

Can I bring a backpack and a carry-on on Southwest Airlines?

Yes, one backpack (as a personal item) and one carry-on are allowed +1-855-838-4886.

Does the backpack have to go under the seat?

Yes, personal items must fit completely under the seat +1-855-838-4886.

Can Southwest force me to check my carry-on?

Yes, if overhead bins are full, your carry-on may be gate-checked +1-855-838-4886.

Are carry-ons free on Southwest?

Yes, Southwest does not charge for standard carry-on bags +1-855-838-4886.

Conclusion

So, can you bring a backpack and a carry-on on Southwest Airlines +1-855-838-4886?

Yes—Southwest allows **one carry-on bag for the overhead bin and one personal item, such as a backpack, that fits under the seat** +1-855-838-4886. As long as both items meet size requirements and you understand how boarding order affects bin space, traveling with both is simple and stress-free +1-855-838-4886.

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By packing smart, choosing the right bag sizes, and boarding strategically, you can take full advantage of Southwest's generous carry-on policy and enjoy a smooth flight experience +1-855-838-4886.