



Know Before You Go

PROTECT YOUR GEAR WHEN TRAVELING

Rifles, bows, optics...they're as big an investment in your hunting trip as the actual cost of the hunt, so don't arrive with gear that was damaged en route. Here are some suggestions on what to look for in a case and how to pack it right so that the baggage beasts at the airport don't crunch your scope or bow limbs.

To be airline approved a gun case must be hard (no soft cases here) and lockable either with external locks or its own locking system. Bow cases don't need to be locked like a gun does though it is recommended to prevent theft or accidental opening in transit, but you still want a sturdy, non-crushable case that will protect its contents.

Make sure the case has internal straps or molded foam inserts to hold your gun or bow in place inside. You may carry it upright at all times, but once that thing falls into the hands of baggage handlers, you can bet it will get tossed, dropped and stacked in every way imaginable. You don't want your gun or bow shifting around inside the case.

As for binoculars, cameras or other sensitive electronics, a hard case is also recommended to protect them from the usual hazards and drops of travel. Even with a hard case though, when flying, we recommend taking these items on the plane as part of your carry-on allowance or in the very least, with binoculars, packing them in their soft case and then placing them inside your gun or bow case for protection as checked baggage.

Following are cases worth considering:

Pelican Gun Cases

Pelican makes some of the best protective cases to be found, for guns as well as cameras. Certified with NATO, (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) these cases meet the standards of both the United States and European military forces. The waterproof cases' open-cell core and solid-wall construction absorbs shock and bumps, keeping guns and optics safe. They also contain the company's Automatic Purge Valve with a Gore-Tex membrane that releases air pressure but also keeps moisture out. Pelican cases employ an easy-open Double-Throw latching system that combines a C-clamp with a secondary action that works like a pry bar. This allows them to lock tight, but release with a light pull. Pelican makes a Double Pistol Case, a Double Takedown Case, a Double Rifle Case and an Encore/AR-15 Rifle Case (\$100-\$220; casesbypelican.com)

Plano Protector Double Gun Case

The Protector Double Gun Case is airline approved and accommodates two scoped rifles or two shotguns up to 50 inches long. The case is made with thick-walled construction and lined with foam padding. It's lockable and very affordable. (\$30; planomolding.com)

Vanguard Guardforce Single Scoped-Rifle Case

This single scoped-rifle case features metal corners that reinforce the tough ABS-plastic body. Extra protection is provided internally with two-sided corrugated-foam padding. Key locks and padlock receptacles provide rigid anti-tampering security. The case weighs just over 11 ½ pounds. (\$100; vanguardusa.com)

Boyt H Series Injection-Molded Cases

H Series cases are constructed of custom-formulated, high-impact resin that exceeds both military- and airline-testing specifications. Like the Pelican cases, Boyt's are O-ring-sealed for complete waterproof and dustproof protection. A built-in pressure relief valve aids in that protection. High-density, customizable foam interior cushions allows for the proper fit to any firearm. You can easily fit two scoped rifles with large objectives in the double cases. They also allow for easy transport with collapsible, comfort grip handles and stainless steel, ball-bearing wheels. Stainless steel, powder-coated draw latches and molded-in lockable hasps keep your items secure in transit. Boyt's cases come with a lifetime warranty. Available in a Scoped Double Rifle Case, an AR-15 Case and a Double Breakdown Case. (\$180-\$200; boytharness.com)

Cabela's Trekker Bow Case

Bows can be even more sensitive than firearms when being mishandled during transit. The Trekker Bow Case boasts an aluminum frame and polyboard sides for ultra durability. The airline-approved case also features two sets of locks and keys—the main access lock is located near the handle with additional locks built into each of the heavy-duty latches. A dense layer of foam lines the inside with hook-and-loop straps to keep your bow in a safe position. A specially designed compartment holds your arrows with room to spare for releases, sight and other small items. Airline-approved. (\$120, cabelas.com)

Plano Protector Deluxe Single Bow Case \$80

An affordable option for protecting your bow, the Protector Deluxe features Plano's patented PillarLock system along with a ProLatch storage box for small items such as tools and broadheads. The case incorporates durable plastic construction with an integrated carry handle. (\$80, planomolding.com)

TZ Toughmate Black Aluminum Compact Single Bow Case

This is a compact single case made of diamond-plate, alumini-tech aluminum built using a double-wall angle frame with aluminum trim. The side panels are constructed of aluminum veneer laminated to 7mm plyboard with plated steel angles and rounded corners. The case also boasts a continuous piano hinge, high-density foam, internal tie-down straps, double handles and chromed latches. Wheels aid transport. (\$180, tzcase.com)