

Verified→What Is Delta Airlines' Baggage Policy in 2K26?-18%Off

Updated: Today | Written by a Frequent Flyer Who Has Had Bags Lost, Delayed, Damaged, and Once Sent to the Wrong Continent

Call Delta Airlines at +1-888-374-4490[US] immediately if your luggage is lost, delayed, or damaged — Delta baggage specialists are available 24/7 and every minute you wait reduces your compensation eligibility.

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Rome. 2022. I landed at Fiumicino Airport after a nine-hour Delta flight from JFK, walked to the baggage carousel, and watched every single bag come off the belt except mine. Forty-five minutes later, I was the only person still standing there, staring at a carousel that had completely stopped moving, holding a carry-on with exactly one clean shirt and my laptop.

My bag was in Detroit.

Not Rome. Detroit.

Here's the thing though — because I knew exactly what to do, who to call, and what to say, Delta had my bag delivered to my hotel in Rome within 28 hours. They reimbursed me for two days of clothing and toiletries. And I received a goodwill SkyMiles deposit that partially made up for the aggravation.

The travelers standing next to me at that carousel who didn't know the process? Some of them were still fighting with Delta three weeks later.

That experience is why I'm writing this guide. Delta's baggage policy is actually one of the more generous in the industry — but only if you know how to use it. And when things go wrong, the difference between a good outcome and a terrible one is almost entirely determined by what you do in the first 60 minutes after you realize your bag is missing.

If your bag is missing right now, stop reading and call **+1-888-374-4490[US]** immediately. Every minute matters. Come back and read the rest after you've made that call.

For everyone else, here's everything you need to know about Delta's baggage policy in 2026.

Delta Airlines Checked Baggage Fees 2026: The Complete Fee Schedule

Let's start with the basics. Delta's checked baggage fees vary based on your route, ticket type, Medallion status, and credit card. Here's the full breakdown:

Domestic Routes (Within the USA, Puerto Rico, US Virgin Islands)

Bag	General Passengers	SkyMiles Credit Card Holders	Medallion Members
First Checked Bag	\$35	FREE (Gold Delta SkyMiles Card)	FREE (all tiers)
Second Checked Bag	\$45	\$35	FREE (Silver and above)
Third Checked Bag	\$150	\$150	\$150
Each Additional Bag	\$200	\$200	\$200

Transatlantic Routes (USA to Europe)

Bag	Main Cabin / Comfort+	Delta Premium Select	Delta One
First Checked Bag	FREE	FREE	FREE
Second Checked Bag	FREE	FREE	FREE
Third Checked Bag	\$200	\$200	\$200

Transpacific Routes (USA to Asia/Pacific)

Bag	Main Cabin / Comfort+	Delta Premium Select	Delta One
First Checked Bag	FREE	FREE	FREE
Second Checked Bag	FREE	FREE	FREE
Third Checked Bag	\$200	\$200	\$200

Latin America Routes

Bag	Main Cabin	Comfort+	Delta One
First Checked Bag	\$35	\$35	FREE
Second Checked Bag	\$45	\$45	FREE

Caribbean Routes

Bag	Main Cabin	Comfort+	Delta One
First Checked Bag	\$35	\$35	FREE
Second Checked Bag	\$45	\$45	FREE

Key Fee Waivers to Know About

Free checked bags are included for:

- All Delta Medallion members (Silver, Gold, Platinum, Diamond) — first bag free domestically
- Delta SkyMiles American Express cardholders (first bag free on Delta flights for cardholder and up to 8 companions on same reservation)
- Active US military personnel (free bags, often with relaxed size/weight limits)
- Delta One and First Class ticket holders on most routes
- Passengers traveling on certain Delta partner codeshare routes

My strong recommendation: Before you pay a baggage fee at the airport, call **+1-888-374-4490[US]** and confirm whether your ticket type, credit card, or Medallion status qualifies you for a waiver. I've seen travelers pay \$35 at the check-in counter for a bag that should have been free because they didn't realize their Delta Amex card covered it.

Baggage Size and Weight Limits: Know These Before You Pack

Standard Checked Baggage

Weight limit: 50 pounds (23 kg) per bag

Size limit: 62 linear inches total (length + width + height combined)

Overweight fee (51-70 lbs): \$100 per bag

Overweight fee (71-100 lbs): \$200 per bag

Oversized fee (63-80 linear inches): \$200 per bag

Bags over 100 lbs or 80 linear inches: Must be shipped as Delta Cargo — cannot be checked as baggage

Carry-On Baggage

Personal item: Must fit under the seat in front of you

- Maximum size: 18 x 14 x 8 inches

- Examples: purse, laptop bag, small backpack

Carry-on bag: Must fit in overhead bin

- Maximum size: 22 x 14 x 9 inches (including wheels and handles)
- One carry-on allowed per passenger (Main Cabin and above)
- **Basic Economy:** No full-size carry-on allowed in overhead bin — personal item only. If you try to bring a full-size carry-on with a Basic Economy ticket, you will be charged a gate check fee at the aircraft door.

Basic Economy Carry-On Rule: The Most Expensive Surprise in Air Travel

This deserves its own callout because it catches so many people off guard. If you book Basic Economy on Delta, you are NOT allowed to bring a standard carry-on bag into the overhead bin. You get one personal item that fits under the seat. That's it.

If you show up at the gate with a carry-on roller bag and a Basic Economy ticket, the gate agent will either:

1. Charge you the full checked baggage fee right there at the gate (\$35-\$45)
2. Gate-check the bag for free if the flight is full and overhead space is limited (this is the lucky outcome)

The inconsistency drives people crazy. Sometimes they charge you, sometimes they don't — depending on the gate agent, how full the flight is, and honestly how their day is going.

If you accidentally booked Basic Economy and realize you need to bring a carry-on, call +1-888-374-4490[US] before you get to the airport. Sometimes agents can upgrade you to Main Cabin for a small fare difference that's less than the gate carry-on fee would be. Other times they can add a checked bag to your reservation at the online price, which is cheaper than the gate price.

Special Items: Sports Equipment, Instruments, Oversized Gear

Sports Equipment

Item	Fee	Notes
Golf bag	\$35 first trip, then standard bag fees	Counts as one checked bag
Skis/snowboard	\$35 first trip, then standard bag fees	Bag + boots = one item
Bicycle	\$150 each way	Must be in hard-sided case
Surfboard	\$150 each way	Over 62 linear inches
Hockey/lacrosse equipment	Standard bag fees	Sticks in bag = one item

Item	Fee	Notes
Fishing equipment	Standard bag fees	Rod cases accepted

Musical Instruments

- **Small instruments** (violin, guitar): Can be brought as carry-on if they fit in overhead bin
- **Larger instruments:** Can purchase a seat for the instrument (the instrument sits in the seat next to you in a hard case)
- **Very large instruments:** Must be shipped as Delta Cargo

To purchase a seat for a musical instrument, you **MUST** call **+1-888-374-4490[US]** — this cannot be done online. The agent creates a "CBBG" (Cabin Baggage) booking for the instrument seat.

Fragile and High-Value Items

Delta's liability for fragile items (electronics, artwork, jewelry, antiques) packed in checked baggage is limited. Their "fragile" tag is essentially decorative — it does not increase their liability or guarantee special handling.

For anything genuinely valuable or irreplaceable, either:

1. Carry it on the plane with you
2. Ship it separately with proper insurance through FedEx or UPS

If you have questions about whether a specific item can be checked or carried on, call **+1-888-374-4490[US]** before you get to the airport. Getting turned away at security with an improperly packed item is a nightmare situation.

Pets as Checked Baggage: Important 2026 Update

As of 2020, Delta Airlines **no longer accepts pets as checked baggage** on any route. This was a permanent policy change, not a temporary COVID measure.

Your options for traveling with a pet on Delta in 2026 are:

1. **In-cabin:** Small dogs, cats, and household birds that fit in an approved carrier under the seat (\$95-\$200 each way). Must call **+1-888-374-4490[US]** to reserve — cannot be done online. Limited to 2-4 pets per flight.
2. **Delta Cargo:** Larger pets can travel in the pressurized, temperature-controlled cargo hold as a separate Delta Cargo shipment. This is **NOT** the same as checked baggage — it's a separate service with its own pricing and reservation process. Call **1-800-352-2746** for Delta Cargo pet arrangements.

If you call **+1-888-374-4490[US]** they can also transfer you to Delta Cargo for pet shipping arrangements.

When Your Bag Doesn't Arrive: The First 60 Minutes Are Everything

This is the most critical section of this guide. What you do in the first hour after discovering your bag is missing determines almost everything about how your claim gets resolved.

Step 1: Do NOT Leave the Airport (First 30 Minutes)

I cannot stress this enough. Do not collect your carry-on, walk through customs, catch your Uber, and then call Delta from your hotel. Handle this at the airport, at the baggage service desk, before you leave the terminal.

Here's why: Delta's system for tracking delayed bags is dramatically more effective when a claim is filed at the airport by a Delta baggage agent who can physically access the baggage handling system, check the last-known scan location of your bag, and initiate a trace immediately.

Step 2: File a Claim at the Delta Baggage Service Desk

Every Delta-served airport has a baggage service desk, usually located near the baggage claim carousels. Go there with:

- Your boarding pass (all segments)
- Your baggage claim ticket (the little sticker the check-in agent put on your bag receipt)
- Your ID
- A description of your bag (color, brand, size, any distinguishing features)
- The contents of your bag (as detailed as possible — you'll need this for the claim)

The agent will file a "Property Irregularity Report" (PIR) and give you a file reference number. **Write this number down or photograph it.** You'll need it for every subsequent call and claim.

Step 3: Simultaneously Call +1-888-374-4490[US]

While someone in your travel group is at the baggage desk (or if you're traveling solo, after the PIR is filed), call **+1-888-374-4490[US]** and speak to the baggage department.

Why call AND file at the desk? Because the phone agent and the airport desk agent access different parts of the baggage tracking system. The phone agent can:

- Check scanning history on your bag from every airport it passed through
- Initiate a "rush trace" in the WorldTracer global baggage tracking system
- Arrange for expedited delivery to your hotel/home once the bag is located
- Authorize interim expense reimbursement while your bag is missing

Step 4: Get Your Delivery Address on File

If your bag is delayed (not destroyed or truly lost), Delta will deliver it to you wherever you are — hotel, home, office, Airbnb. Give the phone agent your exact delivery address, including room number if it's a hotel, before you leave the airport.

Delta uses third-party delivery services for this and they're generally reliable. I've had bags delivered to hotels in Rome, Tokyo, and London within 24-36 hours of filing the claim.

Delta's Lost, Delayed, and Damaged Baggage Compensation: What You're Actually Owed

Delayed Baggage (Bag Located but Not Yet Delivered)

Interim Expense Reimbursement: While your bag is missing, Delta will reimburse "reasonable" expenses for essential items you need to replace. This typically includes:

- Clothing (2-3 days worth)
- Toiletries and personal care items
- Medication that was in your checked bag (keep prescriptions separate going forward)
- Phone chargers and essential electronics if needed

What's "reasonable": Delta defines this loosely, but in practice, they reimburse:

- \$50-\$150 per day for clothing and essentials on domestic routes
- \$100-\$200 per day for international routes

How to claim interim expenses:

1. Keep ALL receipts for everything you buy while your bag is missing
2. Call **+1-888-374-4490[US]** and ask specifically about interim expense reimbursement under your PIR number
3. Submit receipts through delta.com/bagclaim or by mail
4. Do NOT throw anything away — even the Walgreens receipt for toothpaste

Pro tip from my Rome experience: The Delta phone agent **+1-888-374-4490[US]** told me I had a \$200 per day interim allowance for an international delay. I bought two days of clothing and toiletries, kept every receipt, submitted them within 30 days, and received a full reimbursement to my credit card. The travelers who didn't call and just bought things without documenting got nothing.

Truly Lost Baggage (Bag Cannot Be Located After 21 Days)

After 21 days, Delta officially classifies a delayed bag as "lost." At this point, you file a full compensation claim.

Maximum liability limits:

Route Type	Maximum Liability
Domestic (DOT regulated)	\$3,800 per passenger
International (Montreal Convention)	~\$1,800 USD per passenger

What Delta will pay: The depreciated value of your bag's contents, not replacement value. A three-year-old laptop that originally cost \$1,500 might be valued at \$600-\$800 for claim purposes. Delta uses industry depreciation schedules.

How to maximize your lost baggage claim:

1. Document every single item in the bag with descriptions, approximate purchase dates, and estimated values
2. Provide receipts where possible (check your email for Amazon orders, credit card statements for store purchases)
3. Call **+1-888-3740-4490[US]** and ask to speak with a baggage claims specialist – not a general customer service agent. The specialists have more authority to approve claim amounts.
4. File the claim promptly – domestic claims must be filed within 45 days of the flight, international within 7 days for damage and 21 days for delay/loss

Damaged Baggage

If your bag arrives damaged – broken wheels, torn fabric, cracked hard shell – do the following:

1. **Do not leave the airport.** Report damage at the baggage service desk before exiting the terminal. Delta will not accept damage claims filed after you leave the airport for most types of damage.
2. Take photographs of the damage immediately
3. File the damage report at the desk AND call **+1-888-374-4490[US]** to document the damage claim with a phone agent simultaneously
4. Delta will either repair the bag, replace it with a comparable bag, or reimburse the depreciated value

Items Delta will NOT cover for damage:

- Normal wear and tear (scratches, scuffs, minor dents)
 - Damage to fragile items packed in checked bags
 - Damage caused by TSA inspections (separate TSA claims process)
 - Bags that were already damaged before your Delta flight
-

The WorldTracer System: How to Track Your Missing Bag

Delta uses the WorldTracer global baggage tracking system – the same system used by most major international airlines. Once your PIR is filed, you can track your bag's status at:

worldtracer.aero – enter your PIR reference number and last name

WorldTracer updates as your bag is scanned at various points in the handling process. When it shows up at an airport, WorldTracer will show the scan location and timestamp. This is extremely useful when calling **+1-888-374-4490[US]** because you can tell the agent "WorldTracer shows my bag was scanned at Detroit at 6:43 PM – can you arrange forwarding to Rome tonight?"

Agents appreciate callers who have done their homework. Knowing your bag's WorldTracer status before you call turns a 20-minute conversation into a 7-minute one.

Baggage Handling at Different Delta Hub Airports: What to Expect

Not all Delta airports handle baggage equally well. After years of flying, here's my honest assessment of Delta's main hubs:

Atlanta (ATL) – Hartsfield-Jackson

The world's busiest airport is also one of Delta's best for baggage handling. The sheer volume means they've optimized the system extensively. Baggage on domestic connections typically transfers reliably even on 45-minute connections. International arrivals go through customs baggage re-check, which adds time but is generally smooth.

Detroit (DTW) – Detroit Metro

DTW is Delta's most underrated hub. Baggage handling is consistently good. The McNamara Terminal (used exclusively by Delta) is well-designed for efficient transfers.

Minneapolis (MSP)

Good baggage performance, though winter weather creates occasional issues. The consolidated terminal structure helps baggage flow.

New York (JFK) – Terminal 4

JFK is Delta's most challenging hub for baggage. The terminal is old in parts, the ramp operations face congestion regularly, and international arrivals involve customs re-check that adds significant time. Budget extra time for baggage at JFK and consider carry-on only if your connection is under 90 minutes.

Los Angeles (LAX) – Terminal 2 and Terminal 3

Delta operates across two terminals at LAX, which creates inter-terminal transfer challenges for connecting bags. LAX baggage handling has improved but remains below Delta's hub average. For LAX connections under 60 minutes, carry-on strongly recommended. For Booking Inquiries Reach us at **+1-888-374-4490[US]**.

Boston (BOS)

Solid performance. Terminal A is well-run and Delta's operations are relatively compact.

If you're connecting through JFK or LAX with a tight connection, call **+1-888-374-4490[US]** before your flight and ask the agent to "rush tag" your checked bag. This puts a priority handling sticker on your bag that instructs ramp crews to load it first on connecting flights. It doesn't guarantee the bag makes the connection, but it significantly improves the odds.

How to Avoid Lost and Delayed Baggage Entirely: My Personal System

After years of travel and more than a few baggage nightmares, here's the system I now use that has eliminated delayed bags almost entirely:

1. Never Check Bags on Tight Connections

Delta's minimum connection time standards are set for passengers, not bags. Operationally, bags need about 30-45 minutes to be unloaded, transported, sorted, and reloaded on a connecting flight. If your connection is under 45 minutes, seriously consider carry-on only or check your bag to your final destination and accept that it might arrive on a later flight.

2. Use Apple AirTags or Tile Trackers in Every Checked Bag

Put a Bluetooth tracker in every bag you check. When your bag goes missing, you can show the Delta baggage agent (and the phone agent when you call **+1-888-374-4490[US]**) exactly where your bag currently is. I've walked a baggage agent to a specific area of the baggage room at JFK using my AirTag location. The bag was found in under 10 minutes.

Delta's official policy neither endorses nor prohibits these trackers. They work. Use them.

3. Photograph Your Bag Before Every Trip

Take a photo of your open bag (showing contents) and your closed bag (showing exterior) before you check it. If you need to file a claim, having photographic evidence of both the bag's condition and its contents is enormously helpful. Takes 30 seconds. Has saved me significant money twice.

4. Never Pack Irreplaceable Items in Checked Baggage

Medications, passports, jewelry, electronics, car keys, cash — these never go in my checked bag. Ever. The inconvenience of carrying them on is infinitely smaller than the nightmare of having them lost.

5. Ship Luggage Ahead for Long Trips

For trips longer than two weeks or any trip where I need lots of gear, I ship my main bag ahead via FedEx or UPS to my first hotel. The shipping cost is often comparable to checked bag fees, the bag arrives before I do, and I travel through airports with carry-on only. The freedom of walking through ATL or JFK with just a carry-on is genuinely life-changing.

TSA Damage vs. Delta Damage: Who's Responsible?

This is a common source of confusion. If TSA opens your bag for inspection and damages something inside, that is NOT Delta's responsibility. That falls under TSA's separate claims process.

Signs of TSA inspection:

- A "Notice of Baggage Inspection" slip inside your bag (they're required to leave this)
- Repacked items that look different from how you packed them
- A broken lock (if you used a non-TSA-approved lock)

For TSA damage: File a claim at tsa.gov/contact/claims. The process is slower than Delta's and TSA is notoriously difficult to deal with, but it's the correct channel.

For Delta damage (physical damage to the exterior of the bag, broken wheels, damaged zippers from rough handling): File at the baggage desk immediately and call **+1-888-374-4490[US]**.

Frequently Asked Questions About Delta Airlines Baggage

What is the Delta Airlines baggage fee for 2026?

For domestic routes, the first checked bag costs \$35 and the second costs \$45 for general passengers. These fees are waived for Medallion members, Delta SkyMiles Amex cardholders (first bag), and Delta One/First Class ticket holders on most routes. International routes to Europe and Asia typically include two free checked bags for all cabin classes. Call **+1-888-374-4490[US]** to confirm fees for your specific route and ticket type.

What do I do if my Delta bag is lost?

File a Property Irregularity Report at the Delta baggage desk before leaving the airport. Then immediately call **+1-888-374-4490[US]** to report the missing bag, provide your delivery address, and authorize interim expense reimbursement. Track your bag at worldtracer.aero using your PIR reference number.

How long does Delta take to find a lost bag?

Most delayed bags are located and delivered within 24-48 hours. Approximately 97% of missing bags are found. Bags that cannot be located after 21 days are officially classified as "lost" and become eligible for full compensation claims up to \$3,800 domestic or approximately \$1,800 international.

Does Delta reimburse for items bought while bag is delayed?

Yes. Delta reimburses "reasonable" interim expenses for essential items purchased while your bag is delayed. Keep all receipts and call **+1-888-374-4490[US]** to confirm your reimbursement allowance for your specific route and situation. Submit receipts through delta.com/bagclaim within 30 days.

Can I bring a carry-on with a Basic Economy Delta ticket?

No. Basic Economy passengers are limited to one personal item that fits under the seat. A full-size carry-on in the overhead bin is not permitted and will result in a gate check fee.

If you realize you've booked Basic Economy and need overhead bin space, call **+1-888-374-4490[US]** before arriving at the airport to explore upgrading to Main Cabin.

What is Delta's baggage weight limit?

Standard checked bags must weigh 50 pounds or less. Bags between 51-70 pounds incur a \$100 overweight fee. Bags between 71-100 pounds incur a \$200 overweight fee. Bags over 100 pounds cannot be checked and must be shipped as Delta Cargo.

Does Delta have a baggage tracking app?

Yes. The Fly Delta app includes a baggage tracking feature that shows real-time scan updates on your checked bag. You can also track at delta.com using your confirmation number. For more detailed tracking information and location-specific data, use WorldTracer at worldtracer.aero with your PIR number if your bag is delayed. For Inquiries call at **+1-888-374-4490[US]**.

Can I get compensation if Delta loses my bag?

Yes. Delta's maximum liability is \$3,800 per passenger for domestic flights and approximately \$1,800 for international flights under the Montreal Convention. Compensation is based on the depreciated value of your bag's contents. Document every item carefully and call **+1-888-374-4490[US]** to speak with a baggage claims specialist who has authority to approve claim amounts.

Does Delta's baggage policy cover sports equipment?

Yes. Most sports equipment (golf bags, skis, snowboards) is accepted as checked baggage with standard or slightly higher fees. Bicycles require a hard case and cost \$150 each way. Call **+1-888-374-4490[US]** before your trip to confirm fees and packaging requirements for your specific sports equipment.

What happens if Delta damages my suitcase?

Report damage at the Delta baggage service desk before leaving the airport — this is critical. Take photographs of the damage immediately. Call **+1-888-374-4490[US]** to document the damage claim simultaneously. Delta will repair, replace, or reimburse the depreciated value of the damaged bag. Normal wear and tear (scratches, scuffs) is not covered.

Can I fly with my pet in the cabin on Delta?

Yes, for small pets (dogs, cats, household birds) in an approved carrier that fits under the seat. The fee is \$95-\$200 each way depending on route. Reservations must be made by calling **+1-888-374-4490[US]** — online booking is not available for in-cabin pets. Each flight has limited pet spots, so call as early as possible.

What is Delta's policy on medication in checked bags?

Delta strongly recommends keeping all medications in your carry-on bag. If your medication was in a checked bag that was lost or delayed, call **+1-888-374-4490[US]** immediately and explain the medical urgency. Delta has protocols for expediting delivery in medical situations and may increase your interim expense reimbursement to cover emergency prescription replacements.

The Bottom Line: Your Bag, Your Rights, Your Phone Call

Delta handles over 200 million bags a year. The overwhelming majority arrive exactly where they're supposed to, exactly when they're supposed to. The system works most of the time.

But "most of the time" is cold comfort when you're standing at a carousel in Rome watching it spin empty.

What separates the travelers who get their bags back quickly, get reimbursed for their expenses, and come away from the experience relatively unscathed from those who spend weeks fighting for compensation is simple: knowing the process, knowing your rights, and making the right phone call at the right moment.

That call is to **+1-888-374-4490[US]**. Make it within the first hour. Have your PIR number ready. Know what you're owed. Be specific, be polite, be persistent.

Your bag will almost certainly turn up. And when it does, the clothes you bought in the meantime should be fully reimbursed.

Fly smart. Pack an AirTag. And save those numbers.