

Wardrobe on the Go

Garde Robe facilitates luggageless travel BY KAREN J. BANNAN



STUART BEERS

Tom Wajnert lives in Naples, Fla., and is building a second home in Napa Valley, Calif. He splits his time between his passions. It isn't uncommon for him to fly to board meetings in North Carolina or stop in New York for the weekend or to check into his company's main office. He travels for pleasure, too.

No matter what his destination, however, he doesn't lug garment bags or tote suitcases. Instead, Wajnert, who is managing director of the boutique investment bank FairView Advisors, makes a phone call. A day—or even an hour—later, he is reunited with his wardrobe.

Wajnert is a client of Garde Robe, a New York wardrobe storage facility targeted at frequent travelers and people who have more clothes than they do time or closet space. "My wife has furs, eveningwear, dresses, exercise stuff. I have suits and overcoats. When we are coming to New York, we can

get on a plane, show up at our hotel, and everything is there," he says. "When I travel for business, I can call up and have everything FedExed. We both always have exactly what we need."

When people sign up for the Garde Robe service, they do one of two things. New York residents usually get an in-home visit by a wardrobe specialist, says Douglas Greenberg, the company's vice president of sales and marketing. That person helps organize closets and select items that work best together. Out-of-towners select items on their own, although phone consultations are also available. "We give them recommendations on things they should keep with us, such as off-season clothing or eveningwear," Greenberg says. "If someone is from L.A., there is no reason they should be flying around with a winter coat."

Then comes the fun part. Clothes come to the company's climate-controlled, air-purified loft, where they are evaluated, cleaned and repaired, if needed. Each item is assigned a detailed description, down to the size, designer, color and fabric. Then it is photographed. Apparel is given a single high-resolution image, while shoes get both front and side views. Once completed, text and images are brought together in an online portfolio called the virtual closet. (A bound print version of the portfolio is also created.) The portfolios act like a menu. When a client needs a suit for a meeting or a cocktail dress for a charity event, they find what they need and e-mail, call or fax their request.

Garde Robe charges a minimum of \$225 per month, which includes both portfolios as well as a rack that typically holds 50 garments, one breathable canvas accessory box and 10 shoe boxes. Dry cleaning and local New York delivery is also included. Clients who request clothing shipments to other locations—an increasingly popular option, says Greenberg—pay FedEx fees, too, which can surpass \$500, depending on weight.

To date, the company's A-list client list, which includes CEOs, models and socialites, are more than pleased with the service, especially since they do not have to contend with wrinkled clothes or baggage handlers rifling through their designer outfits.

"My wife has said, 'I'm going to be in town for the week, dress me.' She's always completely thrilled," says Wajnert. "I have had them do holiday shopping, too. They know what's in her closet already and what her taste is. I know they will buy something that matches perfectly." ■

Garde Robe, 212.255.3047, www.garderobeonline.com