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Beat the heat and be fabulous on the beach

The hottest summer essentials will help you glow this season. 'Today' style contributor Bobbie Thomas shares tips on what to stash in your bag

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Updated: 7:54 a.m. PT May 4, 2006

Those long lazy days of summer should be all about shedding your worries and enjoying a little R and R. And while being high maintenance is never hot, being prepared will ensure you have fun in the sun. Your style should seem effortless, but while you're sweltering, how do you keep your glow? "Today" style contributor and co-host of "Fashion Police" Bobbie Thomas shows how these beach bag essentials will help you feel fresh without any fuss.

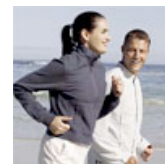
From beach bag to "it" bag

Totes top the list of this season's must-have handbags, and now your everyday carryall can come with you to the beach. This lightweight pleather bag is available in a variety of sherbet colors, and can easily go from the sea to the shops. Just be sure to empty out the sand first (\$75; www.shopintuition.com).

Stock it – don't stuff it

Pack your essential beach basics, without bringing a million bottles. Downsize and think double duty by looking for items that work in more than one way. Obviously everyone needs SPF, and both Abella's ColorShade (\$24; www.skinstore.com) and California Tan's Face Perfector (\$25; www.californiatansunless.com) have SPF coverage, along with a color tint, for a polished matte appearance. Or try Avon's Skin So Soft Bug Repellent, which combats mosquitoes while offering a high level of skin protection (\$10; www.avon.com). A sweaty, sandy face can lead to the beach-babe blues, so clean, tone and moisturize at the same time with Apivita's 3-in-1 cleansing tissues (\$12 for

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Essentials for your beach bag

May 4: The "Today" show's Natalie Morales talks with the show's style contributor Bobbie Thomas about what you should pack in your beach bag this summer.

Today show

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Make-up without being made-up

Feel naked without makeup, even in a swimsuit? While sprucing up your skin, you want to be sure to avoid melting — literally. If you need to pack your favorite face fixers, stick with powders, and go au naturel with mineral makeup, which is sweat-proof and has SPF, making it a no-brainer for the beach (\$24-37; www.gloMinerals.com). An alternative to makeup: Boscia's California Orange natural leaf blotting linens alleviate excess sheen without clogging pores (\$10; www.boscia.net). And nourished skin equals beautiful, healthy skin, so give your face some much-needed moisture with ModelCo's Skin Drink mist (\$30; www.sephora.com).

While everyone worries about protecting their skin, don't ever forget to protect your pout. From drug store to designer, make sure your lip gloss has SPF. Softlips (\$2.49; www.DrugStore.com) and Bobbi Brown (\$16; www.BergdorfGoodman.com) are just a few of the brands that will keep your lips from getting burned. And finally girls, it goes without saying, but if you must lather your lashes, make sure to do so with waterproof mascara!

Don't bug out — just be prepared

There's nothing more stylish than being safe. It never hurts to have a first aid kit handy, and this one has everything you need to tend to scrapes or blisters, without taking up too much room (\$12.50; www.lifeessentialsbyzee.com). And, you can say bye-bye to bugs by simply slipping on a rubber bug-repellent bracelet from Bug Bam (\$1.99; www.bugbam.com). These insect deterrents come in kid's sizes too, so your children can keep away critters with one flick of the wrist.

Busy beach

Don't get bored on the beach! When you're sick of the sun, start a party for your friends. New iPod pillows have built-in speakers — though we doubt you'll be lying down much once you turn the music up (\$9.99; 800-Go-Beyond). For more quiet time, Sudoku books are the latest game craze. Or settle into the sand with a short story book — read as much as you want, without feeling flustered when the sun starts going down (www.BarnesandNoble.com).

Make a splash with your towel

When it comes to beach accessories — be bold. If you haven't been able to incorporate summer's loud graphic prints into your wardrobe yet, try bringing them to the beach. This paisley butterfly print from

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Linens N' Things comes in an innovative round shape, so you'll never have to rotate it (\$14.99; www.linensandthings.com). And for prints that really pop, designers like Pucci and Tory Burch are making a statement with luxe, oversized beach blankets. If you're desperate for a designer deal, don't despair — try sites like Bluefly.com, where you can snag a Pucci printed towel at 20% off the regular price (www.bluefly.com), and for the month of May, Tory Burch's terry towels are on sale for \$95 (www.toryburch.com).

It's the little things that matter

Smaller items are still a great way to go bold, and a scarf is truly the most versatile accessory you can carry. In fact, colorful silk scarves like Missoni's are one of Hollywood's hottest must-haves of the moment, *and* a celeb beauty secret. Use it to keep the hair out of your eyes, tie it on your bag or around your waist for a punch of style, or turn it into a shirt when your day at the beach becomes a night of dining and dancing. (\$180; www.shopintuition.com).

When it comes to the sun, no ordinary hat will do. Stay away from straw, and opt for full-coverage hats like these from Sun Stuff. With SPF 50 — that's right, 50 — you can safeguard your scalp from the sun's harmful rays and prevent future burning, itching and flaking on this easily-forgotten-about area (\$14.99-79.99; www.wearsunstuff.com).

Sunglasses are not just for movie stars, although famous faces have become the experts in this particular area of fashion. Take your cues from Hollywood this summer, and shade your eyes with a pair of oversized wraparound glasses, such as Madonna's signature pair of Blindes.

Cover girl

While you may spend hours picking out the perfect bathing suit, we've got news for you — it's what you wear *over* that bikini that really matters. So next time you're suiting up, don't forget that the beach is a waterfront and can tend to get chilly. A long-sleeve tunic like this one from Victoria's Secret PINK will keep you covered, but with its breathable terry cloth fabric, you won't feel like you're frying (\$49.50; www.victoriasecret.com).

For your tiny tot, we found the perfect beach blanket, towel and cover-up all rolled into one with Target's Hello Kitty Cutie Hooded Poncho (\$14.99; www.target.com).

And, last but not least, just in case you meet Mr. Perfect on the beach, and there's no time to change before he whisks you off for the evening, T-bags leather necklace dresses let you leave your jewelry at home while still looking like the perfect gem (\$66-216; www.shopbop.com).

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