

A GUIDE TO POCKET CARRY

GEAR REVIEW

Duane A. Daiker

Those who choose to carry a concealed firearm in their daily lives are constantly searching for the best way to carry. A shoulder holster may be impractical for your climate or your wardrobe. Wearing a concealed firearm inside the waistband can be uncomfortable, and may not work with your mode of dress all the time. For more and more armed citizens, pocket carry is becoming their main method of concealment. Whether you use a front pocket, or a back pocket, or even a jacket pocket, pocket carry is an excellent way to ensure you have a gun when you need one.

Advantages of Pocket Carry

All concealed carry methods are a compromise of some sort. Pocket carry may not work for all people or all circumstances, but can provide a wealth of practical and tactical advantages:

Ease of Carry Everyone has pockets. Carrying things in our pockets is a familiar regimen. Even

with a bit of bulk in your pocket, there is usually no discomfort – nothing impeding your arms (like a shoulder holster), nothing jabbing into your side (like an inside-the-waistband holster), and nothing jammed into your back (like a small-of-the-back holster). Pocket carry doesn't cause any significant discomfort, even when sitting for an extended period.

Few Clothing Restrictions Although some pants will work better than others, most of what we wear has pockets. It doesn't matter whether you wear a "cover garment," or whether your shirt is tucked in or not.

Good Concealment Pocket carry, with a good holster, generally provides very good concealment. Your gun won't "flash" if you have to bend over or reach up high. Any "printing" of the gun's shape can be diminished by an anti-print panel. Furthermore, people are used to seeing pockets stuffed with things—wallets, cell phones, PDAs and more. Most bulging pocket don't get a second look—the average person doesn't look for a gun in your pocket because that's not how people on TV carry guns.

Casual "Ready" Access

Although pocket holsters may not be the fastest draw, pocket

carry does permit you to have a full firing grip, and be prepared to draw the weapon, while still maintaining a non-threatening posture—your hand in your pocket. By contrast, if you are reaching back under your shirt to your holster positioned at 4:00 – everyone knows what that means – and it can escalate the situation and destroy the element of surprise.

Affordability Although the price of your holster shouldn't be the determinative factor in how you carry, a good quality pocket holster can cost about half or less of the price of a quality inside-the-waistband, belt or shoulder holster.

Disadvantages of Pocket Carry

As always, there are bad points with the good. Each person needs to decide how these factors balance out for them, but for many, the benefits outweigh the drawbacks.

Speed of the Draw Drawing from a pocket holster may not be as fast as other methods of carry. The hand has to enter the pocket and seek a proper grip. Care must be taken that the draw separates the gun from the holster. Nonetheless, with the right combination of equipment, and a proper amount of practice, draw time is respectable and probably better than other methods of deep concealment.

Restrictions on Gun Size Although pockets vary a lot in size, there are practical limitations on the size of a gun that can be pocketed. A full-size 1911 can be concealed inside the waistband, but not in the pocket. However, many very respectable defensive handguns will fit in your pocket.


Inability to Access the Gun with the Weak Hand At least with front pocket carry, access to the gun with the weak hand is extremely difficult, if not impossible. If using rear pocket carry, weak hand access may be possible, but is awkward.

Gear for Pocket Carry

Once you decide to pocket carry, you need to give some thought to your equipment.

Choosing the Right Firearm The first consideration is your firearm. It will be no surprise that the best guns for pocket carry are those that are small in size and light in weight. The very best examples of these types of guns are: the Kel-Tec P-32 (.32 ACP) and P-3AT (.380 ACP) and the North American Arms mini-revolvers (.17 HMR, .22 Short, Long Rifle and Magnum). Nearly anyone can pocket carry one of these if they have a pocket!





The next best guns are those that are still small, although heavier in weight. Some examples are the North American Arms Guardians (.25 NAA, .32 ACP, .32 NAA, .380 ACP), the Seecamps (.32 ACP, .380 ACP), the lightweight Smith & Wesson J-frame and Taurus small frame revolvers (.22 Long Rifle and Magnum, .32 H&R Magnum, 9mm, .38 Special, .357 Magnum), and the Kahr PM and MK pistols (9mm and .40).

Finally, if you have large enough pockets and a good belt, you can carry "sub-compact" sized guns with plenty of firepower, like the "baby Glock" sub-compacts (9mm, .40, .357 SIG), Springfield XD compacts (9mm, .40), Kel-Tec P-11 (9mm), Taurus Millennium (9mm, .40), and even some of the smallest 1911 micro-compacts.

Choosing the Right Pocket Holster Pocket holsters come in a wide array of designs and materials. The ultimate purpose of the holster is to stabilize the gun in the proper position for the draw and cover the trigger for safety. There are two basic styles: front pocket and rear pocket. A front pocket holster holds the gun upright, covers the trigger guard, and provides sufficient width to stabilize the gun

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in the pocket. A rear pocket holster also adds a smooth “anti-print panel” as large as the dimensions of the gun, so that only a smooth square shape is visible on the outside—much like a wallet or PDA. This is called a rear pocket design because it is more often needed when carrying in the rear pocket since a rear pocket is generally drawn more tight, as opposed to a front pocket which is usually looser. Some people will use a rear pocket type holster with an anti-print panel in a front pocket to ensure there is no printing. A few holster makers offer models with a removable anti-print panel, giving the user the benefit of both styles in one holster. Front pocket style holsters are generally ambidextrous, but rear pocket designs are made for a particular “handedness” since the anti-print panel must be on the “outside” of the gun.

There are some variations of the rear pocket holster known as “wallet holsters.” Federal law regulates wallet holsters that permit the gun to be fired while still in the holster. The typical wallet holster that covers the trigger, however, is perfectly legal. Wallet holsters can provide more concealment,

but are often much slower on the draw—particularly if the wallet has to be removed from the pocket to effect the draw. Use some common sense if choosing this method of carry, and don’t carry your credit cards or ID or CWP in a wallet holster that will require you to expose your firearm to make a purchase in a store or identify yourself to a law enforcement officer.

Some front and back pocket holsters will also accommodate a spare magazine for semi-automatic pistols. These holsters usually use the space under the grip to store the extra mag. This type of set-up is not ideal since the spare mag will be in a strong side pocket and require some shifting of the gun to accomplish the reload. However, these holsters do give you the benefit of a reload in nearly the same amount of space as the gun itself.

Pocket holsters can be made out of leather or synthetic materials. Most synthetics, like ballistic nylon or vinyl, are significantly cheaper than leather, and are not form-fit to particular guns, making them more versatile for use with multiple guns. Some synthetic holsters are designed to grip or “stick” to the inside of the pocket.

Recently some pocket holster makers have started to use kydex, a hard form-fit plastic material. Kydex holsters are very rigid and usually have excellent gun retention. Kydex holsters generally have very little flex, and don’t conform to one’s body or pocket.

For many people however, a holster has to be crafted from leather. Leather certainly has the most aesthetic appeal—which may or may not be important for a holster that spends most of its time in your pocket. But, leather is a very practical material for holster use, and has been for centuries. Leather provides good stiffness, and can be made in varying degrees of gun retention. Leather wears well, and generally conforms to the user’s body shape over time.

Ultimately, the choice of your holster style and material is a matter of personal preference. The gun you want to carry, the pocket you want to use, and the clothes you wear, are all necessary considerations in choosing a pocket holster or holsters. Try as many styles as you can, and look for reputable retailers/manufacturers that will allow you to return the holster for a refund if it doesn’t work for you.

Tips for Pocket Carry

Once you have selected your gun and chosen a holster, give some thought to your carry routine. A few things to consider once you have made your decision to pocket carry:

Carry Safe Always pocket carry in a good quality holster, with the trigger covered. A proper holster keeps the gun upright and keeps everything out of the trigger guard. Additionally, you should never carry anything else in the pocket with your gun. Keeping the pocket empty further prevents any inadvertent contact with the trigger (by keys, or a knife, or whatever may be bouncing around in your pockets), and also helps insure a smooth and unimpeded draw when necessary.

Carry Consistently One excellent way to be prepared for a quick reaction under stress is to carry your firearm in the same location at all times. Try and pick a pocket that works for you, and use that pocket whenever possible. You don't want to have to locate the gun if you need it in a hurry.

Carry a Reload Pocket carry often means using a gun that is somewhat of a compromise in size and power. Smaller caliber guns are further justification for carrying a reload. Some pocket holsters are equipped with a holder for an extra magazine. If not, you can purchase magazine or speed loader or speed strip cases separately. Ideally your reload should be in a pocket on the same side as your loading hand—usually strong side for a revolver or weak side for a semi-automatic.

Keep the Gun Clean Guns carried in your pocket tend to collect lint. Believe it or not, pockets are dusty places. Put your gun on a regular schedule (at least once a month) to field-strip, clean out the lint, check for barrel obstructions, and rotate your carry ammo.

Conclusion

Pocket carry can be an excellent alternative for the armed citizen. Some very respectable-sized guns can be carried in a way that is very comfortable, very natural, and very well-concealed. A small investment in a good quality pocket holster, and a little bit of thought and practice, and you can be well-protected wherever you go.

About the Author

Duane A. Daiker is a founder of K&D Holsters. Duane shoots regularly in club IPSC matches and enjoys writing and researching on concealed carry issues. Contact Duane at Duane@KDHolsters.com

Internet Resources for Pocket Holsters

www.DesantisHolster.com
www.Fist-Inc.com
www.GrahamHolsters.com
www.HedleyHolsters.com
www.HighNoonHolsters.com
www.KDHolsters.com
www.KramerLeather.com
www.StellarRigs.com
www.Uncle-Mikes.com



Glock 26 in a front pocket holster.

photograph by oleg volk

photograph by kevin manley



Kel-Tec P-32 being drawn from a front pocket holster. This holster can carry an extra magazine.



Kel-Tec P-32 in a rear pocket holster. Note the removable "anti-print" panel.

photograph by kevin manley