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# to Buffalo: What's with all the cargo shorts?



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By Alyssa Fisher

**I**'ve lived in Florida all my life: born and raised around Fort Lauderdale, graduated from the University of Florida.

Cue the amusing variations of, “You left Florida for Buffalo? Why would you do such a thing? Can we trade places?”

I've responded honestly: It's been about a month, and so far I really like it. I have a great job, my calendar is overwhelmed with events, and people seem willing, even excited to talk to strangers.

But I do have a bone to pick: What's up with the cargo shorts?

I first noticed them one afternoon at Caffe Aroma, where I posted up to finish lingering freelance work. An unabashed people-watcher, I chose a stool by the window facing Bidwell Park. I had only been in Buffalo for a few days, and my curiosity for this new city made getting work done nearly impossible. So I did what I do best and spent my “breaks” observing.

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A man with long wavy hair and tattoos crossed the street toward the cafe. He's cute, I thought. But wait, were those cargo shorts?

Unfortunate. I turned back to my computer.

A few minutes later, I looked up again. A man was tying his bike to a pole – in cargo shorts.

If you're somehow not familiar, the shorts in question have two extra, flappy pockets that fall just above the knee. And I was shocked to see a few more pairs that afternoon.

I don't consider myself an expert on men's fashion, but I did grow up in year-round shorts weather. In my experience, boys were shunned if they left the house in cargo shorts after middle school. There were rumors that guys who wore them in college didn't get fraternity bids.

I went home and asked my three female roommates, all of whom are from Buffalo, if cargo shorts were "a thing" here. They thought about it for a moment. They laughed. And then they confirmed: Cargo shorts are a normal part of men's fashion. They didn't approve but it is what it is. Before I moved here, a mutual friend from Buffalo joked that the city was 10 years behind. Well, it's at least true in the case of shorts.

I'm not trying to be malicious. In fact, I'm a firm believer in staying true to oneself and often rocking unpopular wardrobe staples (i.e. my gold platform tevas).

But, I was still curious to why cargo shorts were seen so widely here. So I hit the streets.

Roving around Canalside, I noticed several men in royal blue shirts and cargo shorts walking on Main Street toward the First Niagara Center. Too easy. They are part of the center's changeover crew and explained that the navy pair one of them wore was work-issued. The other men bought theirs and threw out reasons why.

"They're comfortable when you're working," said Angelo Sciandra, 33, of North Buffalo.

"They never really go out of style," said Dominic Calabrese, 19, of Tonawanda.

"They go with everything," added Gunnar Heintz, 20, of Depew.

Jamoal Newbern of downtown Buffalo wore black cargo pants. He pointed at Heintz.

"This khaki, you can wear with anything," the 25-year-old said. "You can make any outfit."

They agreed the pockets are important for ensuring their phone, wallet and keys don't fall out. You can even carry a bottle of pop, Newbern said. The literal idea of carrying cargo is what appeals most to Christopher

Meyers, 33. The Clarence Center resident fills his extra pockets with his own belongings as well as binkies for his 1-year-old son.

“With regular shorts, your pockets get full really quickly,” he said.

His wife, Sarah, said she rarely wears a purse because she knows she can fit her items in his pockets. He’s usually carrying her sunglasses.

“It’s like a man purse,” she said.

Overall, they’re comfortable and practical, ideal for summertime and running around with his kids. But, he admits, he’s probably been wearing them since ’99.

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