Cargo Pants for Men – The Laid-back Weekend Alternative

Cargo pants burst onto the fashion scene in the 1990s but have since become a classic. These good-looking, easy-care pants lie midway between jeans and khakis in terms of formality. Cargo pants for men offer more colour options than denims and can go where jeans can't. On the other hand, cargos are less stuffy than chinos and just right for laid-back leisure time. Find out why you should have several pairs of these basic bottoms in your wardrobe.

History of Cargo Pants for Men

Army cargo pants for men originated in the British military in the late 1930s. At the time, these pants were the standard BDU (battle dress uniform) trousers. In the early 1940s, the U.S. military incorporated cargo pockets into its now-legendary M42 uniform. These pockets, which were novel at the time, provided ideal storage for paratroopers’ equipment, such as radios and spare batteries. Other military personnel used the cargo pockets to hold items such as gauze dressings, maps, and pen and paper.

Today, labourers in a wide variety of industries and those in hands-on occupations, such as paramedics, rely on these rugged and useful pants. But cargo pants for men aren’t just for work anymore. This versatile trouser features interesting visual details, yet are appropriate in a wide variety of situations. Whether you’re shooting photos while on safari or simply taking a leisurely walk, cargo pants will work for you.
Several distinctive design features distinguish cargo pants for men from regular twill slacks, khakis, or chinos:

- **Tall belt loops** can accommodate wider belts, such as those made of robust leather or sturdy canvas.

- **Roomy cargo pockets**, unlike standard flat pockets, can expand to hold bulkier items. The pockets also feature a flap closure to hold contents securely. Originally, flaps closed with buttons or snaps, but cargo pants today may have hook-and-loop or zipper closures. Generally, there is one pocket on the outside of each leg, although styles vary. Wherever you wear your pants, the cargo pockets should never be filled unless absolutely necessary, since bulky pockets ruin your silhouette. And no, toting your personal electronics and other manly gadgets while you run errands is not an emergency.

- **Reinforced knees and knee pouches** offer an optional measure of protection to both the wearer and the garment itself. A reinforced knee is made with an extra layer of fabric, primarily to prevent premature tearing. A knee pouch allows for a knee pad to be inserted. This is ideal for wearers who kneel often or are at risk of falling.
• **Drawstring cuffs** on cargo pants are essential for preventing dirt, sand, and insects from entering the pants legs at the ankles. This is an aspect of cargos that makes them ideal for your outdoor adventures. Many cargo pants for men don’t feature drawstrings, but this feature is a mark of quality cargos. Drawstring cuffs go beyond utility; they also add an extra dimension of style and create a different leg shape. But please tuck those dangling drawstrings up into the pants legs to keep them out of sight at all times.

• **Ripstop weave** is easily identified by its pattern of raised boxes or diamonds. The interlocking threads make it impossible to rip this specially engineered fabric. If you’re not a hunter or a hiker, regular twill or other plain weaves will do the job just as well.

**Materials**

Almost all cargo pants for men are made primarily of cotton. Cotton is often blended with a synthetic fibre for longer wear and wrinkle resistance.

• **Cotton** is inexpensive, comfortable, and easy to launder. It also has a smooth, matte finish that’s ideal for casual wear. However, 100 percent pure cotton tends to fade over time and tends to wrinkle unless it’s treated.

• **NYCO** is a proprietary blend of nylon and cotton, designed especially for military uniforms and work wear. However, NYCO is also found in casual clothing. The addition of nylon to cotton provides an extra measure of durability and abrasion resistance. While nylon has many good points, it is more costly than polyester.
• **Cotton-and-polyester**, as with cotton and nylon, retain colour better and last longer than pure cotton. Poly-cotton is usually less expensive than both 100 per cent cotton and NYCO. Synthetic blends tend to feel hotter, but this may be an advantage in cool climates.

**Colours**

The classic colours of cargo pants for men are navy, khaki, army green or olive drab (as pictured), black, and white. These neutrals can be worn with tops in a wide array of hues for maximum versatility. Choose all the pants colours if you like, but **at the very least, you should own two pairs: navy and khaki.** Stick with khaki—available in shades ranging from light stone to deep tan—in spring and summer, and switch to navy in autumn and winter.

Camo cargo pants for men have a distinctive look and are primarily worn to avoid detection by other humans and animals. The camouflage pattern suits professional soldiers and hunters, but unless you’re Bear Grylls, save the camo for your annual fishing trip to the Orkneys.

**Cargo Pants Today**

Cargo pants for men, which are usually regarded as weekend apparel, are ideal for forest hikes or picnics in the country. If you’re moving through the urban jungle instead, you’ll be better off choosing a pair of jeans in a dark wash for a slightly more refined look.

When you do wear cargos, they look great with casual and collared shirts and pullovers. These pants are best worn with casual leather shoes or boots (in black or brown), or a favourite pair of sneakers. As always, skip the flip-flops!
Products In This Tutorial

- **Cotton Cargo Pants** *(Recommended)* – the classic leisure pants, 100% cotton makes them both stylish and comfortable.

- **Black/Brown Leather Belt** *(Recommended)* – 1 1/2” wide leather belt perfect for cargo pants.

- **NyCo Cargo Pants** – 50/50 nylon-cotton makes these pants ultra durable and very comfortable. A must for avid hunters and fishers.

- **Cotton Polyester Cargo Pants** – military spec. cargo pants with ripstop fabric made of 60/40 cotton-polyester.