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If you're going on holiday this summer, the chances are you're looking for some new holiday attire. Whether it's a new pair of sandals or a whole new wardrobe, there's loads of stylish summer holiday wear to choose from in 2012. Here's a checklist of style essentials to watch out for.

If you only buy one new thing for your summer holidays, make it new sunglasses. Sunglasses fashion can change wildly from year to year, and 2012 is no exception. This year, we're seeing a more mechanical influence on sunglasses, with small lenses shaped as very round and large sunglasses taking on very square proportions. While frames remain black, brown or tortoiseshell, there is some concession to colour in pink or orange-tinted lenses and the occasional purple tinge.

Your sandals might also need an update for 2012. Gladiator and wedged sandals may have dominated shoe shops a few years ago, but today's summer sandal is resolutely flat and sparse in design. But while there are fewer straps on the average sandal now than in 2010, there's more colour and vibrancy. Choose sandals in contrast colours – for example, a yellow sole with blue or green straps, or ones decked with a Hawaiian print.

If you're after new t-shirts and shorts, the Hawaiian theme continues. Before you recoil in horror, rest assured that this isn't the same kind of Hawaiian print that men were sporting on shirts a decade ago. It's a more upmarket, with distinct prints and delicate colour schemes rather than garish brush strokes. All the same, don't overdo this look: pair Hawaiian print tops with block colour shorts, and if you opt for an all-over Hawaiian print dress, accessorise it simply with black sandals and a black belt.

If you really want to run with it, you'll also find some swimsuits with Hawaiian print motifs. If you're going down this road, stick to a one-piece swimsuit with plain flip flops on the beach so your costume does all the talking. Off the beach, wear with an opaque yellow kaftan and wedges for an effortlessly stylish look. On the other hand, if you'd prefer a new bikini for your summer holiday, avoid large prints and go for a more pared back pattern – for example, waves printed along a plain background or a block colour with a shiny metallic finish.

And finally, don't forget a 2012 summer staple that screams style and practicality: a straw hat. Straw hats might seem like something you'd wear to a test match rather than to Tenerife, but they're big this summer. Choose a straw trilby or bowler hat for an effortlessly fun look, or go for a straw cloche hat for something a bit more dressy and feminine.

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