

Posted on Sun, Nov. 27, 2005

Best bets for jet set

By Michael Martinez
KNIGHT RIDDER

The best part about buying a gift for a traveler is that you almost can't go wrong. Everyone appreciates a new carry-on bag or passport holder. But we've compiled some gift ideas you might not have considered ... a handheld luggage scale so you won't get hit with fees for overweight bags, a key chain that holds your favorite digital images from your last vacation or a dream trip for your favorite sports fan.

Santa baby

- **ITEM:** A definite showstopper for traveling babies. The baby carrier can be worn by a parent or used as a blanket in a stroller.
- **COST:** \$25. Order from www.kileymadison.com. Item is called Holiday Ki Kover.

Luggage in the pink

- **ITEM:** Pink ... the hottest color in luggage. Several manufacturers, including Victorinox, Delsey, Jansport and Kipling, are producing everything from backpacks to cosmetic cases to wheeled carry-ons in various shades of pink. Think every shade from rose petal to hot pink.
- **COST:** Prices vary, depending on the item. \$161.96 for Tommy Hilfiger 27-inch bag at www.luggageonline.com. Available at retail outlets that sell luggage.

Flying lunch box

- **ITEM:** A great way to pack your own lunch or dinner next time you fly. The BYO Lunch Tote is made from neoprene and can store a sandwich, fruit and even drinks at the right temperature. When you're done, it lies flat, so it won't take up space in your carry-on. Comes in several colors.
- **COST:** \$20 from Edwards Luggage, Walnut Creek; also available from Magellan's, (www.magellans.com) and TravelSmart (www.travelsmartnewsletter.com).

Two shoes in one

- **ITEM:** Convertible footwear for easier packing. The Teva Flipsole, which comes in several styles for men and women, is a shoe with a removable midsole that converts to a flip-flop sandal for indoor wear in the shower or your hotel room.
- **COST:** Models start at \$80; we found a women's shoe at Magellan's, but check for others at stores where the Teva brand (www.teva.com) is sold.

Sniff out dirty linens

- **ITEM:** A handy hotel room sleuth. The Hotel Room Inspector (\$15.85) uses ultraviolet light to detect contamination in a darkened room. Use it on bed and bath linens, countertops and toilet seats to make sure your room was properly cleaned before you arrived.
- **COST:** \$15.85 from Magellan's (www.magellans.com).

Don't get suspended

- ITEM: Suspenders that won't set off security alarms. BuzzNot suspenders have no metal pieces ... the crosspatch is leather and the clips are plastic ... so there's no need to remove them before entering airport screening areas. One color: black.

- COST: \$19.85 from Magellan's (www.magellans.com).

Don't lose your stuff

- ITEM: A great way to make sure you don't forget your important belongings. The Tag Alert includes two wafer-thin tags that you attach to your laptop, cell phone or any other valuable item, plus a tiny monitor that attaches to your belt or key ring. If you stray too far from your things (or leave them behind), a loud alarm alerts you.

- COST: \$49.95 from Sharper Image stores in Stoneridge Mall, Walnut Creek, San Francisco and from www.sharperimage.com.

Fat luggage alert

- ITEM: A luggage scale for travelers who want to avoid airline fees for overweight bags. Hook the scale onto your suitcase handle and pick up the other end. It will let you know if you need to leave those extra pairs of shoes at home. Includes a built-in tape measure.

- COST: \$9.95 for 59-pound or 75-pound scale, available from Magellan's (www.magellans.com) and TravelSmart (www.travelsmartnewsletter.com).

Easing airline sleep

- ITEM: The price for the RestEasy set is \$9.95 -- tough to find a gift for that price, and a frequent flier will like this. You get one airline-type pillow, one lightweight blanket, ear bud universal headphones, a pillowcase and two headrest covers, all stuffable into a carry-on bag.

- COST: \$9.95 from ProTravelGear.com.

Sports fan road trips

- ITEM: Gift certificate for a sports fan, including the Rose Bowl, Daytona 500, NFL Pro Bowl in Honolulu, Men's Hockey at the 2006 Olympic Winter Games in Torino, Italy, the NCAA Final Four, the Kentucky Derby -- 5,000 games and events are on the list. The 2006 Baseball Hall of Fame Tour takes the recipient to four great baseball cities and the Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum in Cooperstown.

- COST: Prices vary; call 800-465-1765. E-mail info@roadtrips.com; visit www.roadtrips.com.

TSA-approved locks

- ITEM: TSA has tiny tools it uses to open these locks on locked luggage. TSA has the right to break open any other lock while the traveler needs lots of these locks because you either lose the tiny key or the whole lock. Great stocking stuffer.

- COST: \$5.95 to \$12.95 at Target; \$6.85 to \$19.85 at Magellan's (www.magellans.com).

Shake awake

- ITEM: If one partner has to get up early to catch a flight and the other gets to slumber, Shake Awake alarm clock may preserve the sanity. The travel-size alarm gently vibrates to jar even deep sleepers awake -- though there are no guarantees for Californians who have trained themselves to sleep through California temblors.

- COST: \$24.95. Available in many retail stores and online at Shake Awake (www.shakeawake.com).

Safe drinking water

- ITEM: A surefire way to make sure the water you're drinking is safe. The Steripen is a portable water purifier that uses ultraviolet light to destroy viruses, bacteria and protozoa quickly. It can purify 16 ounces of water in less than a minute.

It's a little too big to carry in your pocket, but it'll fit nicely in a purse or backpack.

- COST: \$149.95 at REI stores in Concord and Berkeley.

Medication reminder

- ITEM: A pillbox that lets you know when it's time to take your medicine. This electronic pillbox has a timer that beeps so you won't forget your medication while traveling. It also holds two ounces of water and includes a straw.

- COST: \$24 from TravelSmart (www.travelsmartnewsletter.com).

Gizmo is map plus music

- ITEM: A GPS and MP3 player in one. The Lowrance iFinder Map and Music Plus is pre-loaded with U.S. cities, roads and interstate exit services. It's also an MP3 player with headphones and has a memory-card slot for more map and music storage.

- COST: \$319 at REI stores in Fremont, Concord and Berkeley.

Keep Bowzer cool

- ITEM: A great way to keep your dog cool on long car rides or hikes. Soak the Outward Hound Cool-It Cooling Bandanna in water and put it around your dog's neck. It'll keep him from overheating on those hot summer car trips or long walks.

- COST: From \$2.70 for small dogs at Active K9 (www.activek9.com).

Fantasy calendar

- ITEM: A desk calendar for daydreamers. The page-a-day Islands calendar is filled with 313 color photos of far-off destinations, from Maui to Mykonos ... a perfect gift to remind you that your summer vacation is approaching.

- COST: \$15.95 at book and stationery stores and from Workman Publishing (www.workman.com).

Vacation at your fingertips

- ITEM: A compact way to store your vacation photos. The Spectcare KeyPix digital picture key chain stores up to 56 images that can be viewed on its small screen. Includes a rechargeable battery and all the software you need to crop and upload images from your computer.

- COST: \$60 from Flight 001 (www.flight001.com), 525 Hayes St., San Francisco; \$49.95 from Sharper Image (www.sharperimage.com; locations in Walnut Creek, Stoneridge Mall, San Francisco); also available from Solutions (www.solutionscatalog.com).

Gifts for big spenders

- ITEM: For the traveler who has everything, a couple of trips of a lifetime. Send someone up in a Moscow-based MiG-25 to see the curvature of the Earth at Mach 2.5. Or how about a five-day shark-diving expedition to Ensenada? The lucky traveler will observe great whites from the safety of a diving cage. Diver certification not necessary.

- COST: \$21,000 for the MiG-25 flying trip from Extravagift (www.extravagift.com); \$12,200 for four people for the shark-diving trip from Wallbounce (www.wallbounce.com).

Passport for all

- ITEM: A clever way to get a friend or spouse to apply for a passport. Lonely Planet's "Don't Let the World Pass You By! 52 Reasons to Have a Passport" is a stocking stuffer that tells you how much fun it is to travel the world if you have a passport: Escape your daily routine, make new friends, dig up your roots, experience world events. An easy, enjoyable read.

- COST: \$10 at bookstores.