

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

GREAT GIFTS FOR TRAVELERS, 2016 EDITION

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“I haven’t been everywhere, but it’s on my list,” the late Susan Sontag once quipped. Here are a few things we’ve discovered that will delight the traveler on your holiday gift list. Wishing you peace, joy, on-time flights, ample space in the overhead bin, and a plane full of happy babies.

Custom T-shirt quilt

“My parents went to Cancun and all I got was this lousy T-shirt,” and this one, and this one . . . Make the most of a drawer-busting collection of travel tees by stealthily collecting them and making a custom quilt. Sure, you can do this yourself if you’re crafty, or you can turn the tees over to Project Repat. The company, a Massachusetts startup, cuts out the graphic bits of t-shirts, stitches them onto a fleece backing (made of recycled plastic bottles), and *voilà!* — a comfy quilt. It’s a great way to recycle those raggedy tees that are too holey to wear, but too special to toss. Sizes range from 4-foot squares to 8-foot squares. Prices start at \$75. www.projectrepat.com.



Packable wrap dress

Who says dressy duds have to eat up a lot of suitcase (or backpack) space? This slinky, wrinkle-resistant wrap dress pops out of its own sewn-in pocket, so you can switch from sporty garb to dinner-worthy

outfit in a flash. A concealed pouch is sewn into the back of the empire-waist dress, so nobody but you will know that you pulled your LBD out of your handbag and popped it on in the ladies’ room. (We’d recommend tights or leggings beneath it in unless you want to rock an Angelina-like flash of leg.) With its ruched sleeves and sweetheart neckline, this flattering black dress is a triumph of fashion-meets-function. Made in the US and machine washable, in sizes from XS to XL, it sells for \$169. www.thepoppet.com.



Rotating globe

Globes are cool. Globes that rotate all by themselves are wicked cool. MOVA globes are made with acrylic layers and contain solar cells. When the globe is exposed to natural or artificial light, the MOVA globe starts to spin. No batteries or wires are involved. For the techie on your gift list, or the traveler who seems to be in perpetual motion, it doesn’t get better than this. Vintage and modern world maps are among the choices available; sizes range from 4.5 inches to 8.5 inches, and prices start at \$125.

Minis (4 inches) start at \$110. Available at www.amazon.com or www.movainternational.com.



The perfect bag

Luggage malfunctions are a bane of travel: just ask anyone who’s had to duct-tape a bag closed, or lost a wheel on a cheapie roller bag. A new company called Away, started in 2015 by two women from eyeglass maker Warby Parker, sells luggage directly to consumers. Their hard-shell carry-on bag hits all the marks: it has an unbreakable polycarbonate exterior, it’s lightweight (the smallest version weighs 7 pounds), plus, it has a built-in USB charger and a (genius) washable, removable zipper pouch for laundry. This luggage — available in four sizes — isn’t cheap, but it’s guaranteed for life. From \$225; www.awaytravel.com.



The cutest backpack

Even the smallest of fry can help lighten the travel load, by donning their own toy-and-snack-filled backpack. Wildkin, based in Nashville, sells a range of colorful, sturdy backpacks and rolling backpacks, in a selection of whimsical prints, like horses, pirates, polka dots, monsters, and big fish. What’s great about this line is that they offer an assortment of sizes. Prices start at \$30 for backpacks and \$84 for rolling models. Find them locally at Little Bits Toys in Wellesley, and Green Planet, Newton Highlands. www.wildkin.com.



Coollest wearable charger

With the proliferation of portable battery chargers, there’s no excuse for running out of juice on the road. One that’s super-easy to pack, because it can be worn on the wrist: the cablet. (Cable + bracelet.) Developed by a former PUMA exec, the cablet is a charge-and-synch cable hidden within a braided leather bracelet. A stainless steel clasp keeps it closed. This compact connector comes in three lengths, from five- to eight inches, and a choice of colors and metal finishes. Models are available for Apple Lightning and micro USB (Droid and other smartphones) devices. From \$99; available at www.kyteandkey.com and some Apple stores.

Touch-up for teeth

Would you skip the Turkish coffee in Turkey, the red wine in Rioja, or the chrysanthemum tea in China? As if. But nobody wants the evidence re-



vealed every time they smile. That’s why the image-conscious folks on your gift list will appreciate the handy, lipstick-sized Everyday GLO Teeth Whitening Maintenance Pen, created by New York City dentist Dr. Jonathan Levine. Hydrogen peroxide, vitamins, and antioxidants keep teeth pearly white and breath minty fresh. \$25 for a monthly supply (if used every day). For a list of local dentists who carry the product, or to order online, visit www.gloscience.com.

“Men Don’t Stink” beard balm

In a small town in Ontario,



Canada, a farming couple has created a line of cheekily named body products for men and women. The stuff smells amazing, it’s sulfate-, paraben-, and dye-free, and much of it is super travel-friendly. What hirsute gent wouldn’t love beard balm (\$22.95), made with soy wax, shea butter, and hemp seed oil, or a solid cologne (\$36) that smells intriguing yet subtle. They donate a percentage of earnings to restoring farmlands and historic barns. www.waltonwoodfarm.com.

Personal alarm device

This is one of those gifts you hope they never have to use, but you’ll feel better knowing they’ve got it. A recently launched (2015) personal safe-



ty device called the Sound Grenade, touted as the world’s smallest SOS alarm, clips to a backpack or travel bag. Designed to repel aggressive wildlife, prevent assaults, and signal for help, the TSA-approved Sound Grenade emits a 120-decibel (thunderclap loud) siren for up to 30 minutes when activated by pulling a pin. (Reinsert the pin, and it stops.) Users have uploaded their stories to the company’s website; they include foiled muggings and even repelled bear attacks. Yikes. From \$14.99; available at www.ROBOCOP.com and www.amazon.com.

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HERE

CELEBRATE THE HOLIDAYS IN N.H.

Go on a candlelit stroll through the history of the holidays, see festive musicals productions, and enjoy ice skating on a pond during Portsmouth’s annual Vintage Christmas celebration. The self-proclaimed “Christmas capital of North America” offers a monthlong lineup of events. Don’t miss the renowned Candlelight Stroll, Dec. 16, when visitors walk along candlelit dirt lanes and learn about 300 years of winter holidays through musical performances and skits. See the wonderful creations for the 26th Annual Gingerbread House Contest at Discover Portsmouth on Middle Street (free exhibition runs through Dec. 23), and attend a holiday dinner at Strawberry Banke’s William Pitt Tavern on Dec. 11, 16, 17, and 18. The Ogunquit Playhouse also presents the Broadway musical “Disney’s Beauty and the Beast” at The Music Hall through Dec. 18. 603-436-8433, www.vintagechristmasnh.org.

SEE DINOSAURS IN MAINE

Find out what dinosaurs looked like, sounded like, and how they moved, at the Portland Science Center, which just launched a new multimedia, interactive exhibit, running through spring 2017. Dinosaurs Unearthed chronicles the discovery of dinosaurs since the first skeleton was found on US soil in New Jersey during 1858. The exhibit includes more than a dozen life-size animatronic dinosaurs, full-size skeletons, fossils, an excavation site, and hands-on activities that will tap your inner paleontologist. Philip Carlo Paratore, a local artist and adjunct professor of art from the University of Southern Maine, also exhibits his Di-

nosaur Portfolio, which evokes the spirit of exploration and discovery. Rates (includes both exhibits): Free, 3 and under; \$14.50, ages 3-12; \$17.50, military, college students, and seniors; and \$19.50, ages 13 and older. 207-812-3850, www.portlandsciencecenter.com.

THERE

GET A FREE PASS TO CANADA’S PARKS

Explore more than 200 of Canada’s natural treasures in 2017 thanks to a free park pass. To celebrate Canada’s 150th birthday, all domestic and international visitors receive free entry to the country’s national parks,

national historic sites, and national marine conservation areas that are operated by Parks Canada for the entire year (a savings of up to \$102 per family). Explore all of Canada’s parks, from Banff National Park in Alberta (the nation’s first and a UNESCO World Heritage Site) to Mealy Mountains National Park in Newfoundland and Labrador (the country’s newest park). Free admission does not include camping or accommodations costs, reservation fees, or any tour or service. See the website for a full list of sites. www.parkscanada.gc.ca/visit.

VISIT JAPAN’S NEW FOUR SEASONS HOTEL

Four Seasons Hotel Kyoto recently opened in the temple

district of Japan’s ancient capital. The 123-room secluded property sits on five acres in a 12th century pond garden that is also near the city’s main business and historic areas. The hotel’s Experience Creator organizes custom programs to match guests interests. Take a traditional Kiyomizu ceramics-making class, learn how to make Japanese lanterns, or sign up for a ninja-training session, which includes meditation, movement, and weaponry. Or go on one of three rickshaw tours around the city. The contemporary hotel has the Braserie, an onsite bistro, the Lounge, where you can grab a gourmet bite, and a teahouse, which offers sakes and champagnes. The special introductory rate includes about \$108

credit for the Lounge, Braserie, or Spa at Four Seasons, also onsite. Rates start at \$665 per night. 800-819-5053, www.fourseasons.com/kyoto.

EVERYWHERE

A FEATURE-RICH TRAVEL BAG

The Brevite Rolltop backpack, made by three brothers from Hingham, blends smart design with clever features. The rugged dual-purpose bag can act like a regular travel or commuter backpack with pockets galore for stashing your laptop and other work supplies, or slip in the adjustable padded insert and it functions as a handy camera bag. The stylish bag has a magnetic, roll-top closure,

and a cavernous interior with a 15-inch laptop sleeve and about 24 liters of space. The unassuming front pouch is an organizer’s delight: This little gear library has pockets, pouches, sleeves, and elastic straps for securing your equipment. The bag’s exterior has a handy cap buckle on one shoulder strap — perfect for storing a 52mm, 58mm, or 67mm lens cap — an exterior water bottle holder, straps for securing a tripod, an attached rain cover, and two narrow zippered pockets on the waist band that can hold SD cards, filters, or a protein bar. A side zipper provides quick access to your camera or other gear, which can be arranged in the fully customizable padded insert. \$140/\$185 without/with insert. www.brevite.co.

RELAX AND THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

Nervous travelers can help alleviate their stress from flying, visiting relatives, and more with Nervana, a small portable device that stimulates the vagus nerve and promotes a sense of calmness. The lightweight battery-powered device sends electronic signals from the left earbud, which has been sprayed with a saline solution, to the nerve fibers in the outer ear canal. This helps combat the fight-or-flight urge and preps the body for a more pleasant experience. To use, squirt the left earbud with saline water and ensure there is a snug fit, and then listen to your favorite tunes, pack for your trip, or just kick back and chill out while signals are transmitted to the nerve. This bioelectric approach may help travelers avoid using anti-anxiety and other related medicines. Current price: \$289. www.experiencenervana.com.

KARI BODNARCHUK



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