

Give the gift of travel goods

By Kathy Witt

Got an inveterate traveler on your holiday gift giving list – one whose packing expertise grows exponentially with each successive adventure? A first time explorer who needs to gear up but isn't sure where – or how – to begin? A culinary, oenophile, Earth-friendly or other niche adventurer who needs specialty travel goods? Give these wanderlust types the gift of travel goods and one that suits their travel IQ.

Travelers expect products to be as smart as they are and the trend in travel goods has been problem-solving, multitasking, super lightweight products sized for carrying on and tricked out with lots of organizing pockets and panels for electronics, power cords, business accessories – and yes, even clothing.

For travel vets and newbies

Travel goods manufacturers are creating products that anticipate, meet and exceed the needs (and expectations) of today's traveler and sure to elicit oohs and ahs from the gift recipient – like Outdoor Products' Power Pack™ backpack (\$90), lightweight and loaded with specialized compartments and able to keep up with serious globetrotters without slowing them down. A retractable Check-In Slider lets travelers flash boarding pass and ID. Side pockets, fleece-lined Sunglass Pocket, padded laptop compartment and Digital Gear Panel keeps gadgets, including USB cords and chargers, sorted, organized and protected.

At the other end of the travel spectrum, traveling newbies will appreciate Ricardo Beverly Hills' Pasadena Collection, particularly the perfectly sized 21" Expandable 4-Wheel WheelAboard (\$260) in polycarbonate – that's hard side in layman-speak. Superlight and expandable, it offers versatility with a removable tie bar in the suiter section and an uber organizing two-compartment packing system.

“The two-compartment packing feature does more than just divide the case,” says Lynn Johnson, Ricardo Beverly Hills' vice president of design and development. “Each compartment is set up for a different kind of packing, but at the same time each is flexible enough to allow you to organize for many different kinds of trips.”

In between pricewise but working on both levels is Briggs & Riley's Exchange 26 Duffle Bag (\$160.00). The trendy two-bags-in-one piece converts from duffle to backpack with a quick zip that reveals padded backpack harness with sternum strap. With another zip, you can expand the bag three additional inches . . . meaning, it's time to shop because you've got plenty of room to bring home souvenirs.

Travel goodies for foodies and eco-friendly types

Several travel goods manufactures are giving foodies reasons to rejoice with products that allow them to safely transport a coveted bottle of wine, olive oil or other gourmand's elixir discovered on their culinary adventures. Ellesco's eco-friendly VinniBag (\$28), a savvy pouch fitted with air chambers, and BottleWise's new Rollup™ (\$19.99), a padded, insulated sleeve, protect your wine in checked bags – so you won't unzip your bag to find merlot-drenched sweaters and

slacks. Both items are reusable and also can be pressed into service to protect bottles of fine perfume and fragile figurines.

For travelers who want to go gently into that good destination there are lots of green-minded products, including GreenSmart's Mandrill Backpack (\$109.95). Forty plastic bottles go into its construction, an elaborate process that involves gathering recycled bottles, grinding them into chips and washing them to convert into fiber – and that's just the half of it. The fiber is then spun into yarn, woven into GreenSmart's fabrics and transformed into one very hip backpack, complete with large midsection for notebooks or change of clothes, front pocket for smaller accessories and two side pockets for cell phone and a water bottle – to begin the process anew.

This is an apt – and responsible-minded – backpack for the college crowd and young sophisticates. GreenSmart products are named after endangered animals and the company donates 10 percent of its profits to non-profit organizations that help to create a socially conscious planet. The backpack is roomy, too, with space to hold necessities for a day outing or an overnight or weekend trip.

His and hers travel gear

The way to win your girlie-girl's heart is with travel goods that do the heavy lifting and dirty work for her, like Topcor's new Crystal Clipa (\$39.99), the instant handbag hanger studded with Swarovski™. Your gal can glam up her handbag, tote or backpack (and keep it off the floor) with luggage jewelry in polished silver, gold and hematite, triple plated for durability and catching the light with six sparkly Swarovski crystals. When not on your bag, Clipa can be slipped onto the wrist.

The utilitarian but oh so elegant Pump Gloves® (\$14.95) were inspired by the feminine silhouettes of the 1950s. Made from nylon spandex, the gloves, which extend to the wrist, come in classic black with a white grip or light grey with a soft pink grip with each featuring a tight polka dot palm. A stocking stuffer with fashion sense, the gloves are one-size-fits-all, but do double duty as driving gloves to protect hands from the sun.

Need "his and hers" gifts – or perhaps a little something-something for yourself and your significant other for an upcoming getaway? It's Pacsafe's newly revamped Walletsafe™ line for him; BOCONI's luscious Addison iPouch Mobile Wallet with wristlet strap (\$68) for her.

Guys will go for the slim and uber-organizing Walletsafe™ 80 Bi-fold (\$24.99) and Walletsafe™ 100 Tri-fold (\$19.99) travel wallets, both with slash-proof metal chain to keep cash and cards anchored to you at all times. Girls will drool over BOCONI's petite new "It" item, beautiful in black, purple and olive patent leather with "Quick-Cat" lining – think sexy leopard spots – trimmed with antiqued silver hardware and sized to hold a femme's fundamentals: iPhone or Blackberry, credit/debit cards and mad money.

For both him and her, it's Red Street Venture's newly launched RUNNUR (\$34), a carry-all that has stylishly reinterpreted toting daily essentials by way of a strap worn messenger-style across the body from shoulder to hip – think Batman's utility belt teched up for the times, with

dedicated pockets for stowing cell phone, Mp3 player, ID, money, credit cards, business cards, camera, sunglasses, even a bottle of water.

“The RUNNUR organizes everything you usually carry around in your pockets or in a fanny pack,” says Andrew Hamra, the product’s creator. “You don’t have to go digging for anything – and it doesn’t count as a carry-on.”

And for everybody else on the list

Finally, in the one-size-fits-all category, you can’t go wrong with these gifts: BedVoyage’s exquisite Bamboo Blanket (\$39.99) that boasts a softness quotient to rival that of your pet kitty and, at 40 x 70 inches, just the right size to snuggle into in chilly airplane cabins; and Flapjack’s new Retro Tags (\$9.99 each), nostalgia in vinyl designed to tap into everyone’s inner madcap, with Pez Boy and Pez Girl, Cassette, Atari Joystick, Betty Boop, Scooter, Little Miss Sunshine and Rubik’s Cube ready to tag your bag with a kooky edge.

PHOTOS

Ricardo Beverly Hills’ Pasadena Collection with the 21” Expandable 4-Wheel WheelAboard in the foreground

Photo: Ricardo Beverly Hills

Briggs & Riley’s Exchange 26 Duffle Bag

Photo: Briggs & Riley

Ellesco’s VinniBag

Photo: Ellesco

GreenSmart’s Mandrill Backpack

Photo: GreenSmart

Crystal Clipa from Topcor

Photo: Topcor

Pump Gloves® – Protective Gloves for Pumping Gasoline™

Photo:

BOCONI’s Addison iPouch Mobile Wallet

Photo: BOCONI

The RUNNUR from Red Street Venture

Photo: Red Street Venture

Retro Tags by Flapjack

Photo: Flapjack