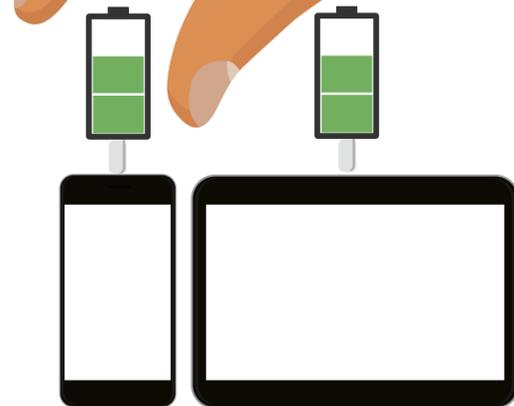
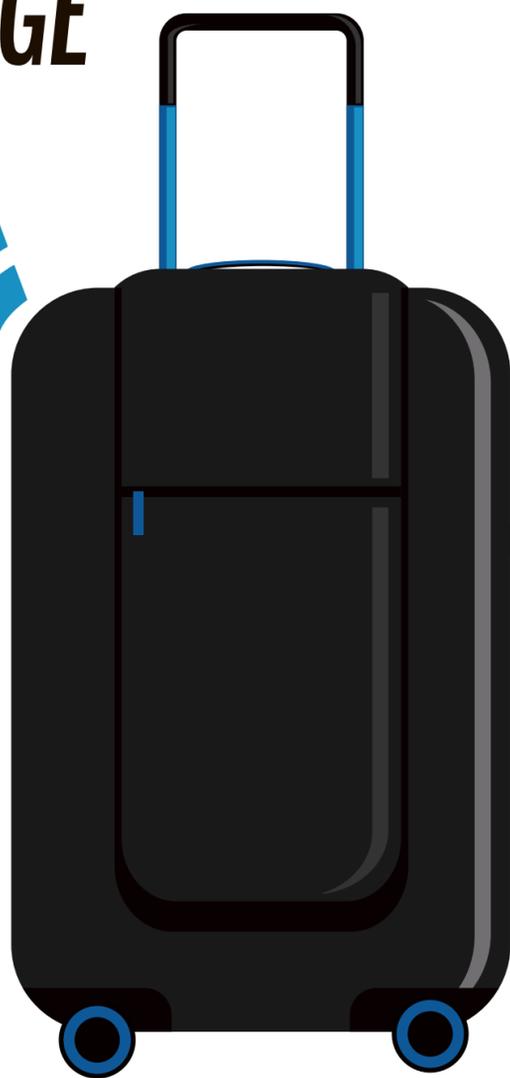


The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

NEW GROUND RULES FOR SMART LUGGAGE



BY ANDREA SACHS
THE WASHINGTON POST

If you own smart luggage, you should test its intelligence as soon as possible. The IQ exam that matters? Whether you can take out its lithium battery.

Airlines including American, Alaska, Hawaiian, Delta, United, and Southwest no longer allow passengers to fly with smart bags that contain nonremovable lithium batteries. The policy change applies to checked and carry-on bags that require lithium batteries to power high-tech features such as a USB charging station and a location tracker.

"Customers who travel with a smart bag must be able to remove the battery in case the bag has to be checked at any point in the customer's journey," American Airlines said in a statement. "If the battery cannot be removed, the bag will not be allowed."

The rule springs from safety concerns. Lithium metal and lithium ion/polymer batteries are susceptible to emitting smoke, catching fire, and even exploding. Between March 1991 and May 2017, the Federal Aviation Administration documented 160 incidents involving lithium batteries that were being transported as cargo or baggage. The agency already prohibits passengers from checking spare lithium batteries used for personal electronic devices and portable rechargers, as well as several lithium-powered items such as e-cigarettes and vape pens. The FAA permits the items inside the cabin. (For information on flying with hazardous materials, see

the FAA's Pack Safe guidelines.)

The airlines are not snubbing all smart bags: Luggage with extractable batteries is permitted, with some oversight. Passengers who check their smart carriers must remove the battery and tote it onboard. As carry-on, the battery can stay put but must be turned off, per FAA protocol. However, if a flight attendant decides to gate-check the bag, you must remove the battery before it goes into the belly of the plane.

Smart luggage performs more than beast-of-burden duties. Depending on the model, the brainy bag might come with USB ports for charging gadgets, GPS tracking, electronic locks, and built-in digital scales. One company called Modobag allows travelers to zoom around on their luggage like a scooter, which tops out at 8 miles per hour. Many manufacturers, such as Away, Barracuda, G-Ro, Raden, Arlo Skye, Travelpro, and Heys (the only maker to use AAA batteries), sell smart luggage that complies with the new rule. The ones that do not are rethinking their designs.

"Luggage manufacturers are already responding to airlines' safety concerns," said Michele Marini Pittenger,

president of the Travel Goods Association. "The recent attention surrounding lithium ion batteries will surely lead to action by manufacturers to make new iterations of smart luggage as safe as possible."

The rule came earlier than expected. The International Civil Aviation Organization, the UN agency that sets aviation safety standards and recommends practices for more than 190 countries, had decided to start restricting smart luggage next January. However, the International Air Transport Association, which represents about 275 airlines worldwide, instituted the ban a year early. An IATA spokesman said the organization's members would follow its recommendations starting Jan. 15. Participants include major carriers such as United, JetBlue, KLM, and Virgin Atlantic, as well as many smaller airlines, including Slovenia's Adria Airways, Egypt's Nile Air and Iran's Kish Airlines.

Consider yourself warned: If you arrive at the airport with the luggage non grata, the airline will not permit the piece onboard. You will have to repack your belongings in your secondary bags or purchase new luggage at the airport — a costly solution for a careless mistake.

HERE

SPA HOTEL DEBUTS IN WEST HARTFORD

A third Delamar hotel has debuted in Connecticut, adding a West Hartford location to its roster of boutique properties that also includes Southport and Greenwich. This new hotel in the Capital Region boasts 114 rooms and suites, full service luxury spa, and farm-to-table restaurant, Artisan. Take advantage of a series of winter packages such as Winter Weekends, Girls Getaway, Date Night, and others. Art lovers will particularly like the Connecticut Art Trail Package that includes use of an Art Trail Passport to visit University of St. Joseph Art Museum, Hill-Stead Museum, New Britain Museum of Art, and the Wadsworth Atheneum. Guests can kick off the tour by viewing the hotel's own exhibition, featuring works on loan from the New Britain Museum of American Art. An in-room bottle of wine rounds out the package. Room rates from \$219. 860-937-2500, delamar.com/west-hartford

EMERALD ISLE ADVENTURE

Lace up your vagabond boots and get ready for seven days of hiking, biking, kayaking, surfing, and horseback riding on an off-the-beaten-track adventure. The 7 Day Magnetic North Adventure Tour, the newest offering by Vagabond Small Group Tours of Ireland, covers a route including Northern Ireland, and the north west counties of Donegal, Leitrim, Sligo, and Mayo. Highlights include visits to the cliff-top ruins of Dunluce Castle, Queen Maeve's tomb on Knocknaree

Mountain, Giant's Causeway and Carrick a Rede rope bridge, black cab tour of Belfast city, cycling in the Glenveagh National Park, and more. The tour requires a good level of fitness, such as the ability to hike and bike on varied terrain for 2.5 hours. Trips depart from Dublin every Sunday from April 29 through Sept. 30. Per person, double rate \$1,886. 833-230-0288, vagabondtoursofireland.com/tour/7-day-magnetic-north-northern-ireland-adventure-tour/

THERE

WINTER GLAMPING IN CANADA

Take winter romance to a new level in one of the cozy glamping domes at Ridgeback Lodge, New Brunswick. Located less than an hour north of Saint John on the Bay of Fundy, the property offers a number of Dream Domes (from \$155) nestled in the snow-blanketed landscape. Each dome in the adult-only camp features a roaring woodstove, kitchenette, bathroom



with glass shower, king or queen bed, and a private outdoor wood-fired hot tub. With no phone, TV, or Internet, you'll have plenty of time for snowshoeing along nearly 3 miles of on-site trails, and for exploring the surrounding forests. (Rentals available.) Nearby, Elmhurst Outdoors offers six groomed cross-country ski trails and additional snowshoeing experiences. Additional

accommodations include Stargazer Domes (from \$175); and Standard and Deluxe Cabins (from \$120/\$155). 506-763-2617, ridgebacklodge.com

EVERYWHERE

GADGET IMPROVES FLIGHT EXPERIENCE

Those who feel squeezed into a seat

when flying (and who doesn't?) the Airhook offers a clever two-in-one solution to add more space in a limited environment — operating as a stable drink holder as well as a mount for an electronics device. Simply open your tray table, hook on the device, and lock it closed. You can then secure your electronics (up to 8.5 inches tall) to the seat in front of you, and enjoy viewing games or movies without the tray table intruding on your space. The viewing angle can be adjusted for reclined seats. In addition, it holds an airline cup, and can or bottle up to 16 ounces. The Airhook collapses for easy storage in its own travel bag. \$24.95 includes free shipping. theairhook.com

PORTABLE WHITE NOISE MACHINE FOR BABIES

Traveling with an infant can be a challenge, especially when schedules and itineraries disrupt regular sleep patterns. Harried parents may want to check out Hushh, a portable sound machine for baby made by Marpac. Three sound options (bright white noise, deep white noise, and gentle surf) help lull your baby to sleep, and stay asleep in unfamiliar environments. A locking feature prevents unintentional changes in sound, and small amber LED acts as a nightlight. Recharges with USB cable, included. Lightweight and small (3.8 ounces; 3.5-inch diameter), Hushh fits easily in your travel bag. \$34.95 includes free FedEx ground shipping. marpac.com/collections/sound-machines/products/hushh



VAGABOND SMALL GROUP TOURS OF IRELAND