

Practical gifts for the traveler

We know it's late, and lots of you already have your tree up, the shopping finished, packages wrapped, and cards in the mail. What a shame! You're going to miss all the excitement of the self-inflicted hysteria that putting everything off to the last minute can produce.

But chances are, even the most organized revelers are still racking their brains over a name or two on the gift list. If these lucky recipients should happen to be travelers, perhaps we can be of some help.

Slide that last tray of cookies out of the oven, pour a cup of coffee, and sit down with the stack of catalogs that have been piling up for weeks. This is going to be easy.

First off, forget all the usual stuff — coffee table books, leatherette travel diaries, money belts, and collapsible umbrellas. Most travelers have closets full of this stuff. Scratch luggage, too. It should be selected only by the person who'll be using it. The same can be said for most travel guidebooks.

Now we can get serious.

Travel-related gifts quite naturally fall into two categories — things to take along on a trip and things to use at home either before or after the trip.

1. Things to take along: (The operative words here are compact and practical.)

- Binoculars — a small but powerful pair is useful not only in the wild but also in cathedrals and museums. The best ones weigh just 6-8 ounces, have 8X or 10X power, and come with a carrying case.

- Collapsible drinking cup that doesn't leak.

- Concentrated laundry detergent in a tube.

- Survival Tool — the size of a credit card, this inexpensive tool



can be used as a knife, nut wrench, ruler, prybar, bottle opener, chisel, and more. Definitely not for klutzes who would never be able to figure out how it's supposed to work, but perfect for the "handy" on your list.

(The above are all available by mail from Magellan's, 1-800-962-4943)

- Traveler's clothesline. Our favorite is Flexo-line, a braided rubber line that weighs less than an ounce but stretches up to seven feet. No clothespins needed, the braids separate to hold laundry firmly in place. (Send \$6.99 to Flexo-line, P.O. Box 162, Dunbridge, OH 43414).

- Taxi wallet. A cleverly designed affair with pockets and sleeves and special compartments for everything from coins and bills to receipts and credit cards. Plus, it can be snapped securely onto a belt. (The Territory Ahead, 1-800-882-4323).

- Healthy Back Bag. Hangs asymmetrically from a special shoulder strap that distributes weight evenly. Lots of pockets inside and out, but still with enough open space to hold a full assortment of cameras and guidebooks. (Norm Thompson, 1-800-547-1160).

- Hanging trifold organizer. Organizes all your bathroom essentials and cosmetic or shaving gear in eight separate pockets. It unfolds to hang on a doorknob or shower rod for easy access. Even though a certain amount of luggage space is sacrificed, we find these to be immensely useful. (Budget Europe Travel Service, 1-800-441-2387).

- Silk long johns. Perfect for travelers, male or female, who worry about being cold. Lightweight, easy to wash and dry, silk underwear adds an extra layer of warmth without bulk. Wear under regular clothes and/or as pajamas. These actually come in many styles and are relatively inexpensive. (Winter Silks, 1-800-648-7455).

- Tiny stretch gloves fit into any purse, camera bag, suitcase, or coat pocket to be at the ready when weather turns brisk. These wonderful little gloves come in every possible color and cost under \$1 a pair at discount depart-

ment stores. Tip: they're available only at this time of year, so stock up now.

2. Things to keep at home:

- Books. Not ordinary guidebooks but travel-related novels, mysteries, histories, and biographies. *Murder on The Silk Road* by Stefanie Matteson, *Within Tuscany* by Matthew Spender, and *Travels With a Donkey* by Robert Lewis Stevenson are examples of good reading either before or after a trip. (The Literate Traveler, 1-800-850-2665).

- Cookbooks. Titles such as *Italy for the Gourmet Traveler*, *Real Taste of Jamaica*, and *Brazil — A Cook's Tour* can make a trip last forever. (Jessica's Biscuit Cookbook Catalog, 1-800-878-4264).

- Video tapes. Study these carefully before purchasing. Many aren't very good, just a string of hotel promotions. Two to try — "The Three Faces of Scotland," for the history as well as the scenery, and "National Parks of the West by Train" featuring America's Southwest. (Wireless, 1-800-669-9999).

- Scrapbooks. Oversized albums with acid-free pages are perfect for displaying not only photos but ticket stubs, city maps, theater programs, and the like. Another possibility — Photo-Shoe Boxes for organized storage. (Exposures, 1-800-222-4947).

- Puzzles. Anyone who's put together a 500-piece puzzle of Notre Dame's Rose Window will appreciate it all the more. Ditto for a 3-D Taj Mahal or Neuschwanstein Castle. (Bits and Pieces, 1-800-544-7297).

- Museum reproductions. A Renoir Gondola pin for anyone who lost their heart in Venice or a T'ang Horse Tie for a recent returnee from China. (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1-800-225-5592).

- Maps. Not road maps but highly detailed, large-scale maps, suitable for framing. "World Cities at Night" measuring 25" x 38" is a dramatic graphic look at population density, with more than 8,300 cities highlighted. "The United States" map is even bigger — 37" x 58" — with exceptional detail and colorful shaded-relief for a 3-D look. (Raven Maps and Images, 1-800-237-0798).

There you have it, solutions to all your gift-giving dilemmas. Bear in mind, of course, that many of these items are available locally as well.

But if you still can't come to a decision on just the right travel gift, here's a last idea. Order copies of all the catalogs to give as gifts ... and attach a check!

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