

Travel bag trails

A travel bag is an opportunity for an airline to show off a little, to say it's the one prepared to go that extra inch to give its key business class customers something welcoming and caring. Radio producer and long distant traveller Joanne Luke unzips a bundle of business class bags and judges what she finds.

Three of the bags I looked at, Iberia's, bmi's and Qantas' were a joy to open. They gave my tired psyche a lift and roused an "Ah, that's nice. Thank you," sort of feeling inside me. They were just what a stressed executive setting off on a hard flight needed.

But I'm afraid most of the bags I looked at were a bit of a

moisturisers for example which would seem to me to be the number one essential in the de-hydrating low pressures in aircraft cabins.

Brownie points are also go to Air Canada whose bag has a wonderfully refreshing re-hydrating face spray, and American Airlines who provide tooth pics. Why don't all the bags have these simple innovations that can really make a difference?

My favourite bags:

A fanfare for bmi, Virgin and El Al.

Bmi's bag has great compartments, excellent packaging, and enough goodies to fill a Christmas stocking: mouth wash, a pair of soothing goggles, sprays, gels, socks with pads and a full length toothbrush. Bravo.

El Al also had a very good bag with extras like nail clippers, a mirror, sewing kit and Q-tips. Virgin of course famously combine first and business so their bag should more correctly be judged in the "first class" category, but they go the whole hog with a sleep suit, sleep remedy and balm - they might as well throw in a bed time story.

In the 'good' category come Qantas, Iberia, Continental, Air Canada and



Qantas provides his and hers options

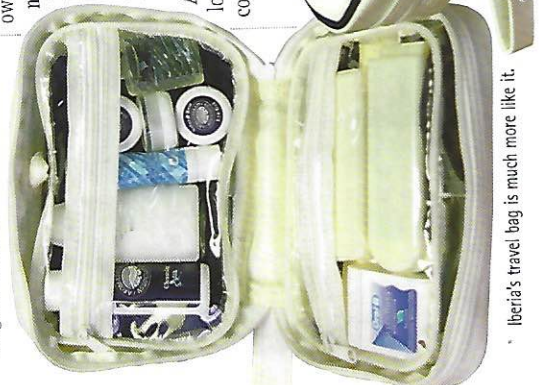
disappointment. I got the impression many airlines have become lazy about the finer detail of their service. Less than half the bags contained



American Airlines' bag is ok but jumbled

American. Qantas has one for sir, and one for the madam. Of course! Sir, surely, would like a good razor and a suitable aftershave whereas madam is much more taken with her cleansing milk. It's simple, and satisfying. Saudi Airlines and Iberia also have similarly good gender-specified bags.

Iberia's travel bag contains a Rochas range of products which includes



Iberia's travel bag is much more like it.

shades are pleasing on the eye. It also has two compartments, one of which is perforated to give the face flannel air. I also appreciated its temple balm with a thyme fragrance, nice thought.

American Airlines' has a good 'origins' range of products, there's also some tissues which is a good idea, but there's only one compartment so its usability is it's downfall: put your toothbrush back in the bag and make your socks wet?!

And there are many others that could do better. Air Brussels, KLM, Austrian Airlines, Lufthansa and Lauda.

Air Brussels' bag reminds me of what we used to see in the 80's. There's just nothing to it. The socks are rough, eye mask too small, there's hardly enough toothpaste for one sitting and the lack of an essential moisturiser or fresher wipe is astounding.



KLM and Austrian Airlines have designed their travel bags like a bad pencil case. They're silver, remind me of my laptop, and are difficult to use. Austrian Airlines is the worst offender of the two because it has awkwardly folded green cardboard on the inside, which gets in the way of opening and closing the monstrosity and to top it all, its contents are then minimal.

Continental's bag is fun and has tie tacs! They've also put a hook on the bag so you can hang it up in the bathroom. Neat.

Two more booby bags include Lufthansa's spartan sack and Lauda's bum bag which is not only a silly idea but its contents are as dull as its grey socks.

Travel bags needn't be a trail, they should be a treat. Lessons learned? Well, maybe some of the airlines should try putting some of their own socks on and pulling them up. +