

News & Notes

TRAVEL • MANUFACTURER • RETAIL

TRAVEL

Tightening Electronics Restrictions Could Hamper International Travel to the U.S.



The Transportation Security Administration implemented new restrictions last March on travelers entering the United States from 10 airports in the Middle East and Africa, preventing them from carrying on any electronic devices larger than a smartphone. Now the ban, which in practice prohibits tablets and laptop computers, could be expanded to incoming flights from Europe as well – a move that some experts say could disrupt global travel and seriously damage international tourism. Details of the potential ban are not yet known, but airlines and tour industry professionals are preparing for significant slowdowns if and when the ban is implemented on the more than 350 flights per day from Europe to the United States. It is the world's busiest international travel corridor. Because many businesses do not allow employees to travel with laptops in checked luggage, business travel could see the biggest slump. The impact would be largest on U.S. airlines. Because 40% of all overseas visitors to the United States – nearly 15 million travelers per year who spend an average of \$3,000 to \$4,000 per visit – come from Europe, the effects could be felt far and wide. The International Air Transport Association has called on the Trump Administration to find alternatives to the travel ban as currently implemented.

SOURCE: CNN

Global Luggage Market Growing

Luggage and accessories are decreasingly seen as having only utilitarian value and are increasingly functioning as fashion accessories as well. Led by this trend, along with increased spending on leisure and business travel worldwide, the global luggage market is growing at a 6.07% rate and is projected to continue at that pace over the next five years. According to a study from Technavio, a growing middle class is fueling air travel worldwide and the increasing popularity of smart suitcases and fashion backpacks, coupled with growing popularity of outdoor sports and adventure travel, leads analysts to believe the market will continue to expand. Manufacturers are responding to growing demand for durable luggage products that are also compact and light by incorporating materials such as nylon, polyester, polycarbonates and microfibers.

SOURCE: BUSINESS WIRE

American Airlines Cutting More Legroom

American Airlines plans to add more seats to its new Boeing 737 Max jetliners, which would decrease the seat pitch – or the space between the front of one seat and the back of the seat in front of it. Seat pitch in American's economy cabin is currently 31 inches, but the new plan would reduce it to 30 inches in most of the cabin, and down to 29 inches for three unfortunate rows of seats. Industry minimum is 28 inches, a pitch used only by low cost carriers Spirit and Frontier. Delta and United seat pitch ranges between 30 and 31 inches, while JetBlue, Southwest and Alaska offer between 31 and 33 inches in their cabins. United is considering a similar strategy, however. American will offer 36 "Main Cabin Extra" economy seats in addition to its 16 first class seats for travelers who value extra legroom enough to pay for it. The newly configured aircraft will enter service later this year.

SOURCE: CNN

Where Do Americans Go?



Approximately 33 million Americans traveled overseas in 2015, an increase of 7% from the previous year. The upward trend is expected to continue, and according to travel research site WanderBat, the following locations are where Americans are traveling most for both business and pleasure. Five of the top 10 most-visited cities are in Europe, while Caribbean destinations remain popular due to their proximity to the East Coast. Beyond those two regions,

China and India snuck into the top 10 as well. In terms of year-over-year increases, Thailand grew in popularity by more than 35% from 2014 to 2015. The most popular overseas destination for American travelers? The United Kingdom, with 2,885,000 visitors in 2015, or roughly 9% of the total market for American travelers. The Dominican Republic, Jamaica and the Bahamas are the most popular Caribbean destinations, while France, Italy, Germany and Spain round out the rest.

SOURCE: ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

United Changes Policies

After suffering through a nationwide public relations disaster following the highly publicized forced removal of a passenger from an oversold flight, United Airlines has laid out a 10-point plan to address the issues and change the policies that led to the incident. First, the airline announced it would end its practice of overbooking flights, a move that was quickly matched by competitor Southwest Airlines. United also raised the maximum compensation for a passenger voluntarily leaving a flight

to \$10,000, which should make involuntary removals extremely rare. The airline has also empowered employees to give customers perks including bonus mileage when things go wrong, and it has cut down on the red tape that comes with getting compensation for lost luggage with a \$1,500 per bag “no questions asked” policy. This approach is designed to de-escalate interactions with frustrated travelers in an effort to improve the travel experience for all parties.

SOURCE: NBC NEWS

Trump Travel Ban Fight Heads to Supreme Court

After a federal appeals court upheld a lower court’s ruling that President Donald Trump’s proposed ban prohibiting travelers from six majority Muslim countries from entering the United States, the administration has announced it plans to take its appeal to the Supreme Court. The Fourth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the indefinite block of the ban by a vote of 10-3 on May 25. The ban would have prevented travelers from Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen from enter-

ing the United States for 90 days, as well as preventing all refugees from entering the U.S. for 120 days. Earlier the attorneys general of 16 states and the District of Columbia cosigned a brief filed with the Fourth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals asking it to uphold the ruling that blocked the ban on the basis that it was “grounded in religion” and therefore a violation of the constitution. Federal judges in Hawaii and Washington have blocked the President’s revised executive orders as well.

SOURCES: CNN, NBC NEWS

Four Tips to Prepare Your Phone for International Travel

Traveling overseas this summer? The world is more connected than ever, but if you don’t take care to plan for your phone you may find yourself unexpectedly disconnected. *WIRED* magazine offers four tips to make your smartphone work while traveling abroad. 1. Set your phone to Wi-Fi only. By turning off cellular access you can continue to use your phone as normal when connected to a local wireless network. 2. American providers offer temporary traveler plans. AT&T’s Passport plan provides 200MB of data and unlimited texting in more than 200 countries. Verizon’s similar service is called Travel Pass. 3. Unlock your phone and add a new SIM card. Probably not an option for the technologically disinclined traveler, but for millennials and those with smartphone savvy, swapping a SIM card for a local one while abroad can be no big deal. 4. Use an app like WhatsApp or WeChat to allow you to connect with friends from home while utilizing either the Wi-Fi or cellular network of your destination, depending on which of options one through three were most appealing to you. These apps, unlike conventional international roaming charges, keep calls cheap or free rather than a dollar a minute or more.

SOURCE: WIRED

Little-Known Facts About Lost Luggage

The good folks at Unclaimed Baggage Center, a one-of-a-kind store that sells lost luggage purchased from the airlines, recently published its Top 10 list of little known facts about lost luggage. These include the fact that the chances of an airline permanently losing your bag are extremely low – about one-tenth of 1%. Roughly 99% of all luggage is reunited with its owners without issue; and the vast majority of the missing 1% also eventually makes its way to the correct traveler. And most of the luggage is faulty or clasped incorrectly, meaning the blame for a lot of lost luggage lies not with the airlines but with travelers. After an intensive 90-day search, if airlines cannot reunite bags with their rightful owners, Unclaimed Baggage Center purchases the unclaimed items.

SOURCE: UNCLAIMED BAGGAGE CENTER

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How to Travel with Pets

One recent study suggests that one-third of dog owners take their pets with them when they travel for two or more nights. Another study says the percentage is even higher. Either way, pet owners clearly love to travel with their pets. So how can they ensure the safest trip possible for their furry friends? Follow this advice from Dr. Jessica Downing, a veterinarian in Valley Cottage, NY. For road trips, ensure that pets are transported safely inside a car carrier and secured by a seatbelt, rather than allowing them to roam free throughout the vehicle. Air travelers will want to select a pet-friendly airline by calling ahead to ask about specific policies and requirements. Remember that service animals are not pets (they are working animals) and are not subject to the same travel requirements. If you know your pet becomes agitated while traveling, ask your veterinarian about anti-anxiety medication. Bring your pet's regular food and an extra supply of medication to ensure as comfortable a trip as possible, and do remember to bring vaccination records and a health certificate.

SOURCE: VALLEY COTTAGE ANIMAL HOSPITAL

Interest in Cuba Travel Flagging?

One year ago, after the United States lifted travel restrictions to Cuba, Americans were excited about the prospect of traveling there. There was sudden and widespread interest in the island as a vacation destination. Just one year later, though, according to a study from travel insurance provider Allianz Global Assistance, interest in travel to Cuba appears to be waning. The company's survey found that just 2% of Americans expected to travel to Cuba in the next six months. The same number expected to visit in the next year, and 10% think they will go sometime in 2018. Concerns over safety and the country's communist government were initially on the minds of potential travelers, but now it's a lack of information on Cuban travel experiences, travel infrastructure and even Internet connectivity that make Americans on the whole less likely to travel to Cuba. Despite these reports, cruise lines are offering increased itineraries to the island.

SOURCE: HOUSTON CHRONICLE

PROKAS Wins Award

The PROKAS Ultimax Luggage Collection has received a 2017 Red Dot Award for design. The collection features a spinner trunk, 2-piece wide body set and a 3-piece standard set, all featuring the T-Cruiser handle system and patented Cyclone Spherical spinner wheel system. The award, presented by



Design Centrum Nordrhein Westfalen, is one of the most prestigious design competitions in the world. The sought-after Red Dot award has become an international seal of outstanding design quality. The international jury bestows the seal on products that set themselves apart thanks to strong design.

SOURCE: PROKAS

Biaggi Video Wins Award

Biaggi, makers of compact and stowable luggage, made a lot of waves with its viral video from last year that featured Rachel Grant demonstrating how to pack 100 items into a carry-on bag. The video was honored alongside big brands such as Pepsi, Starbucks and Apple last month with a Shorty Award. Presented to honor the best people and organizations on social media, the Shorty Awards incorporate millions of participants via Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, YouTube and more. This year was the ninth year for the award. Biaggi was also featured on the television show "The View" this spring. Lori Greiner, recognized as one of the "sharks" from the TV show "Shark Tank," selects five of her favorite products and Biaggi was happy to be included. The company will soon be featured on an episode of ABC's "Good Morning America" as well, so stay tuned.

SOURCE: BIAGGI

Ricardo Beverly Hills' New Booth at The Show

Visitors to The 2017 International Travel Goods Show in Las Vegas likely noticed Ricardo Beverly Hills' new exhibit space. The luggage and travel accessory maker combined West Coast inspired materials with a related color palette to build a booth with a mid-century modern look. Natural maple shutters and brushed silver accents set off bright white walls. The architecturally interesting space featured soft accent lighting and a retail appeal to resemble the shopping path travelers take when shopping for luggage. The modern booth used white displays with clean lines and built-in tablets to showcase branding and products via multimedia storytelling.

The booth also provided a comfortable lounge where guests could relax and enjoy a break from the rigors of The Show.

SOURCE: RICARDO BEVERLY HILLS



The new booth for Ricardo Beverly Hills at The 2017 International Travel Goods Show in Las Vegas featured clean lines and a comfortable, West Coast vibe.

Eagle Creek News

Adventure travel gear brand Eagle Creek is proud to announce its sponsorship of the new P3 program from the Pacific Crest Trail Association (PCTA). In a joint effort with PCTA, the P3 program highlights 10 Pacific Crest Trail thru-hikers who will promote and advocate for the trail. The hikers will use social media to share their experiences during hikes from Mexico to Canada. Eagle Creek has outfitted all 10 hikers with new ultralight Pack-It Specter Tech packing cubes and toiletry kits, which are launching at retail this summer. "PCT thru-hikers are very concerned with weight," said Eagle Creek's Marketing Coordinator Daniel Funk. "Every ounce counts, but organization is also critical when living out of one bag for so long. Pack-It Specter Tech will help the hikers compress their gear and know where everything is without adding weight." The company is also pleased to announce its Tarmac Carry-On has been named the Best Rolling Carry-On in the 2017 SmarterTravel Editors' Choice Awards. SmarterTravel, a subsidiary of TripAdvisor, is a major online travel resource for travel news and advice. Its Executive Editor, Christine Sarkis, said Eagle Creek's Tarmac Carry-On was the favorite among "fierce competition" this year. SmarterTravel staff provided input to select the Editors' Choice winners, which was then evaluated and voted on by senior-level editors. Eagle Creek also announces a new partnership with the Bodhi Agency as representatives for the Midwest and Great Lakes sales territory, effective immediately. The Bodhi Agency team members will leverage their collective 35+ years in the outdoor and travel industries to increase the Eagle Creek brand presence in this large, key territory.

SOURCE: EAGLE CREEK



The Eagle Creek Tarmac Carry-On was named the favorite in the 2017 SmarterTravel Editors' Choice Awards.

Whistler at the George Lopez Celebrity Golf Classic

Celebrity Participants in the 10th Annual George Lopez Celebrity Golf Classic in Los Angeles last month were gifted bags from Olympia International. The manufacturer of soft- and hard-side luggage and backpacks happily donated polycarbonate 21" carry-ons from its Whistler luggage line in bright red and blue finishes. The company is proud to sponsor the event, a fundraiser to benefit the George Lopez Foundation, which is dedicated to raising awareness of kidney disease and organ donation. For more information about the foundation visit georgelopezfoundation.org. SOURCE: OLYMPIA INTERNATIONAL



Safe Skies Approved in New Zealand

The New Zealand Aviation Security Service (AVSEC) has signed an agreement with travel lock maker Safe Skies to make Safe Skies locks an acceptable option for travels to, from and within the island nation. Safe Skies luggage locks can be opened and relocked by security personnel when luggage inspection is needed, making the locks an ideal option for travelers who still want to secure their belongings in transit. "The safety of our visitors and New Zealand residents is unequivocally our top priority," said Mark Wheeler, general manager of AVSEC, "so we're constantly looking for the most inno-

vative tools and technology that will enhance our security and keep travelers' minds at ease. With Safe Skies luggage locks, AVSEC security personnel have the master tools to unlock and inspect baggage without damaging the passenger's property." Safe Skies locks, which include padlocks, combination locks, zipper locks, cable locks and luggage straps – are accepted and recognized by the United States Transportation Security Administration, as well as airport security services in Australia, Canada, Germany, Israel, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

SOURCE: SAFE SKIES

Another Kickstarter Success

FYB London aims to make the world's smartest luxury handbag, and thanks to its recent Kickstarter crowdfunding success that goal is one step closer to reality. Featuring a wireless charging pocket, a biometric lock, Bluetooth connectivity and RFID protection, the stylish, pure leather SMART London City Handbag and SMART London Travel Tote combine cutting edge technology with timeless styling. The company's \$30,000 fundraising goal was surpassed in less than three days. The expected delivery date for the SMART bags is August of 2017. FYB London was founded by design-



er Dani Richeson and entrepreneur Jason Lowe. Lowe previously founded Numinous Luggage and was selected to participate in the prestigious Virgin Disruptors event last year. The company name stands for Follow Your Bliss.

SOURCE: FYB LONDON

Consumers Still Like Stores

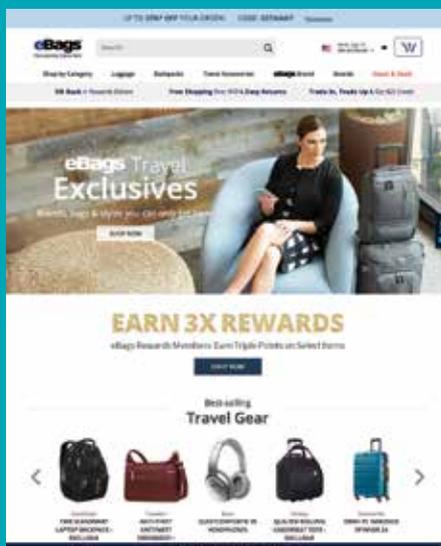
A report from payments company Adyen reveals that consumers still enjoy shopping in retail stores as long as the experience meets their high expectations. The study shows that 86% of respondents preferred going to a brick-and-mortar store to exchange or return items purchased online, while nearly two-thirds of respondents valued being able to see, touch, sample and try on items first and foremost. Long lines will drive consumers out of a store faster than anything else; nearly 80% of respondents said they had abandoned a purchase and left a store due to long lines. One-third of those surveyed said they enjoy shopping as a social activity – a feature that online shopping has a particularly difficult time coopting.

SOURCE: CHAIN STORE AGE

Build a Business Culture That Values Employees Over Rules

Defer to employees not to the rule-book. That's the advice of entrepreneur and business author Bill Taylor who, writing for the *Harvard Business Review*, says that all companies, from major airlines to mom and pop retailers, can learn a valuable lesson from the recent fiasco with United Express Flight 3411 (the one in which a passenger was dragged kicking and screaming from his seat). The airline, Taylor writes, had built a culture that relied on "rules and procedures at the expense of letting flesh-and-blood human beings solve problems and make sound decisions. It's time for leaders to toss out their rule books and trust their people." *The Wall Street Journal* analyzed the steps that led to United's PR disaster and concluded the problem was not initiated with employees but with the "rules-based culture" that prevented the airline's 85,000 presumably competent employees from making decisions. This is the polar opposite of the approach taken by retailer Nordstrom, a 72,500-person company with an employee handbook that fits entirely on a small card: "Use best judgment in all situations. There will be no additional rules." This, Taylor concludes, is the way forward for companies looking to build valued brands and a loyal customer base. Empower employees to do what makes sense.

SOURCE: HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW



Samsonite Acquires eBags

The largest travel luggage company in the world, Samsonite International, has agreed to purchase online travel accessory and luggage retailer eBags for \$105 million. The purchase is part of Samsonite's strategy to enhance its e-commerce direct-to-customer capabilities. "This

is an exciting day for eBags and we are thrilled to be joining the Samsonite family," said eBags President and CEO Mike Edwards. eBags is the number one online luggage and bag retailer in the U.S., posting \$158.5 million in net sales for fiscal 2016, an increase of more than 23% over the previous year.

SOURCE: SAMSONITE

Trip Advisor is Exploring Retail

Travel review and booking website TripAdvisor is opening its first brick-and-mortar retail store. Located at the Raleigh-Durham Airport, the store is part of an overhaul of retail shops at the airport's terminal 2. Details about the store's offerings have not yet been released, but if it's based on the contents of the TripAdvisor online store it will likely include travel gear such as luggage tags, travel packs and passport holders, as well as clothing and hats. Some items are likely to be TripAdvisor branded. An

interactive wall in the store will feature touch-screens for browsing hotels and destination information. The store is a partnership with travel retailer Paradies



Lagardere, which operates 850 stores and restaurants in nearly 100 airports.

SOURCE: SKIFT

Changing Consumer Habits Are Reshaping Retail

Unemployment is down and economic growth is positive, yet many retailers are struggling mightily. Stores are closing, nearly 90,000 retail workers have lost their jobs since October and nine national chains have filed for bankruptcy so far this year. The trouble is just beginning, says the Director of Retail Studies at Columbia Business School, Mark Cohen. "I think the number of store closings will continue at an accelerated pace," Cohen says, "right through this

year into next year." There are 1,200 malls currently operating in the U.S., comprising much of the real estate devoted to retail, experts say. Most malls will have to close or find a new identity – including revamping into mixed-use developments featuring office space, housing, gyms and small retail. It's still not clear how those spaces will look after this transition is complete. While retail has traditionally evolved at a slower pace, the changes these days happen practically overnight. SOURCE: NPR