

list we forget

Christmas is a time of giving... advice mostly, especially from magazines, so Sally Feldman thought she'd get in on the act with her ultimate (and ultimately useless) shopping guide

Okay, 'tis the season to be jolly, I know, but mostly it's a season fraught with anxiety about what to buy for Christmas. Around the world, the eternally disorganised and time-poor among us are poring over ingenious lists of must-have fashion-homewares-gardening-literary-beauty-golf-hardware gift ideas compiled for those who lead lives of quiet exasperation.

For a retail-challenged procrastinator such as I, these lists are actually glorious works of fiction that gild the whole mad Christmas-shopping lily. They allow me at the very least to dream for just long enough to run out of time to get to that gorgeous shop in a suburb where the parking's impossible and they're all out of that darling little purse in purple suede anyway. Every year I carefully tear out these little treasures from magazines, stick them in a drawer and then forget all about them. So this year, I thought I'd try my hand at Christmas fiction, and have come up with my own fantasy travel wish list.

+ THE AIRBRUSH MAILLOT Swimwear so artfully cut that it will make you look 20 again rather than size 20 (or at least the 20-year-old you wished you were had you not been so racked with youthful insecurity). Three-year/six-resort guarantee to keep you feeling like a 20-year-old, so make sure to buy the matching board shorts for your significant other.

+ MIRACLE BEACH TOWEL This beach towel is resistant to sand and other small, gritty particles, such as the ash from summer bushfires. Also repels small children with ice-cream, Frisbees, seagulls, too-tanned guys who play bat and ball at the water's edge, and anyone listening to the cricket on a small transistor radio.

Hot tip for stressed packers: stay tuned for airlines converting economy class into walk-in robes

+ AIRCRAFT HANGERS In the era of wheeled suitcases that spend most of their time semi-upright, how about luggage fitted with micro hanging rails to hang up your clothes in transit. Hot tip for stressed packers: stay tuned for selected airlines converting economy class into walk-in robes.

+ BABEL FISH WITH MATCHING CASE Throw out the pocket phrasebooks and stick a small but perfectly sterile creature in your ear to understand every language in the universe. *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* has much to answer for, not least the germ of an idea to make asking the way to a leg-waxing centre in Croatia just that little bit easier. Only drawback? Everybody needs one, so buy the handy six-pack and share them around.

+ LONG-TERM MEMORY STICK That thumb-sized piece of hardware containing your entire hard drive will be put to far better use hotwired directly into your consciousness. Saves schlepping camera equipment, travel journals and diaries. Also comes with a bonus short-term memory stick, so you'll remember the name of the person you've just been introduced to at the Christmas cocktail party. Additional benefits include being able to print holiday snaps just by thinking about them.

+ UNIVERSAL TIPPER No time to change money before you fly? Forget all that embarrassed fumbling when you arrive at the hotel. The UT even comes with interchangeable purses: Swarovski crystal-embroidered clutch for social occasions; shabby-chic leather for solo outings. Complete with change in all the major currencies and selected banana republics. Buy the anti-mugging gift pack and you'll get the *Luxe Guide to Cab-Driver Insults and Concierge Body Language* absolutely free.

+ DEHYDRATED REHYDRATION KIT Now you can fly with all of the essential beauty products you need without setting off alarms at the airport. Cleanser, toner, moisturiser and SPF30 suntan lotion come in handy 10g briquettes in a chic, transparent pouch. Simply check in, call room service for highball glasses and just add water.

+ PSYCHIC GPS No more listening to an irritating robotic accent. No more poring over illegible street directories under dim streetlights. No more frustration because your husband refuses to ask for directions. The PGPS knows where you're going before you do. Buy one and get a free psychic year-planner with self-erasing whiteboard.

Coming next time: the top 10 non-addictive ways to live with post-traumatic-holiday syndrome. **VE+T**

