

travel essentials

THE AMPHIBIAN

This 26-litre high-performance daypack is the bag that dares you to take it to the edge, and then jump off. The Rapid is a waterproof, lockable dry bag, which also operates as a fully functional daypack complete with padded, quick-dry shoulder straps, removable waist and sternum straps, and an ergonomic back panel for elevated comfort levels. As well as keeping water out, it also has a hydration pocket so you can carry a bladder of H₂O to keep you juiced up while you're exploring. Perfect for both wandering adventurers and travellers to wetter climes, who won't let a bit of rain stop them from exploring.

www.seatosummit.com | AU\$189



FISHEYE FRENZY

If iPhone photo apps tickle your creative itch, the olloclip is going to put a smile on your dial. This compact clip squeezes three lenses into one tiny package. Switch from wide-angle to fish-eye in an instant and simply unscrew the upper lens for detailed macro shots of those rambutan at the market. Noticed how the phone's video function crops the view around the subject? The wide-angle lens expands the range so you can complement your footage with more than a just lick of context. The clip slips right onto the corner of your iPhone 4, 4S or 5 (sans case), without damaging the phone's fragile exterior. It comes in a microfiber bag that doubles as a cleaner.

www.olloclip.com | AU\$70



WASH AND ROLL

A wash bag is never going to be the most glamorous item on your list when you're packing for a great trip, but forget it – or take a crap one that spills your toothbrush straight onto the hairy floor of the first shower you step into – and you'll be feeling fuzzy toothed and scungy for the whole time. The Deuter Wash Bag Roll features a cushioned cylinder to tidily and safely stash all your pastes in during transit, which then unfurls to reveal a range of pockets and a handy hook to hang the bag up in the shower. It even has a detachable mini mirror for shaving, applying war paint or using to send SOS messages if shipwrecked. Also available is Deuter's Wash Center, a bag that comes with both a hook and a mirror, and boasts an organiser strip and a detachable inner for lightweight shower dashes.

www.deuter.com | AU\$42.95



SWISH SWISS CASE

Victorinox make Swiss Army Knives, so we were expecting big things from their Spectra Global Carry-On case – a miniature corkscrew that pops out from the handle at least. But the Spectra is less gimmick and more grunt. Slim and lightweight, with the trademark cross insignia, the case is made of tough polycarbonate and comes with a lifetime warranty. The best bits are the security and tracking features: a built-in 'Travel Sentry Approved' lock so US screeners can inspect your luggage without mangling it, and a tracking program that will help reunite you with your luggage if it goes AWOL. Forgotten your combination code? No problem – Victorinox will retrieve it, so long as you've registered. With sizeable dimensions (28cm x 55cm x 20cm), it's spacious inside, but we challenge you to pack it within the carry-on weight limit.

www.victorinox.com | AU\$549



ZIPBUDS FRESH

What do you get when you combine military grade earphone cabling with a funky fluoro zipper? Earphones that are guaranteed not to tangle and are always ready to go when you are. Zipbuds FRESH deliver high-end audio via a patented 'vertebrae' zipper that is lightweight, flexible and a little bit groovy. They come in a range of colours with three ear tips, to give you a snug fit and make sure you're never deprived of tunes. Zipbuds are compatible with iPhone, iPad, iPod, Android and any media device with a traditional 3.5mm headphone input. Just think – no more time wasted untangling cables retrieved from the bowels of backpacks, stuck together with lint and the remnants of muesli bars. Genius. Just watch your hair.

www.zipbuds.com.au | AU\$69.95



GEAR GOGGLES

Look into the future. Imagine a pair of über-cool-looking glasses, fitted with a subtle and super funky high-tech device – essentially a tiny lightweight LCD screen mounted on the edge of your peripheral vision – that is capable of providing you with instant information (distances between you and an object of interest, directions on how to get places and so on), and simultaneously capture and broadcast photos and video. You're conceptualising the new Google Glass. Capable of performing all the tricks above, via a wireless bluetooth connection to your smartphone, the Glass allows you to read and send text messages, get directions, take photos and video, and do Google searches – all while riding your bike or skiing down a hill. How can you get one? Sadly you can't – not until next year (although several lucky punters have been selected to put these gadgets through prototype testing). You can check them out here though:

www.google.com/glass/start



2400 SOUTHWEST PACK

This ultralight backpack may look flimsy, but don't be fooled – it'll outlive you. The lads from Hyperlight Mountain Gear combined their outdoor expertise with technology developed by a nuclear weapons physicist and an aerospace engineer to develop the 2400 Southwest Pack. It's made from 100 per cent waterproof Cuben Fiber fabric (up to 70 per cent lighter and four times stronger than Kevlar). The sturdy hip strap ensures the load will be secure when you're loping through rough terrain, and your shoulders won't feel like a slab of tenderised meat. They've also included a weatherproof storm closure, an ice axe loop and handy hip pockets so you can tuck away your trail mix or camera.

www.hyperlightmountaingear.com AU\$255

world wide web

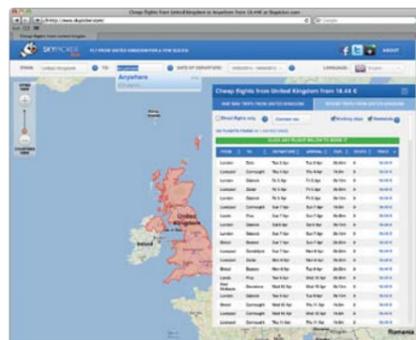
www.wikivoyage.com

Those familiar with Wikitravel may experience a bit of déjà vu with the new Wiki project, but there's more here than meets the eye. In 2012, Wikitravel editors voted to split from the site, which currently relies on ad revenue for funding, to re-join with the not-for-profit Wikimedia group, promising more ad-free and user-owned content. While much of the material is the same as you'd find on Wikitravel, developments with Wikivoyage are promising. So far it features around 27,000 entries, with sections divided into itineraries and travel topics, from which you can compile your own printable PDF book. With 200 volunteer editors and a small army of contributors adding to Wikivoyage daily, it's a space worth watching.



www.skypicker.com

Down in the Southern Hemisphere, we've always been a tad jealous of those lucky Europeans with so many countries so accessible and close. And with a bit of forward planning, flights across the continent can be cheaper than a slab of beer. The next time you're travelling through the region, check out Skypicker, a new budget flight search engine that allows you to sort through the best deals available. Just enter a range of dates and your approximate budget, and the site will find the cheapest options available by combining discount offers across various low-cost carriers. The total price, including fees and taxes, isn't calculated until you book through the carrier website, but overall it's a good option for flexible travellers on a budget.



apps



World Lens

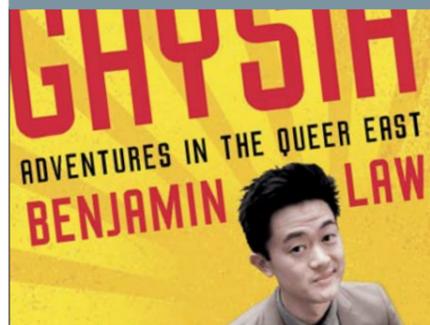
If your sign language skills aren't crash hot, World Lens can help avoid those awkward games of charade. Simply take a photograph of any passage of text you need to decipher, including signs, menus and labels, and this app will translate the words into the language of your choosing. You'll need to purchase language packs separately, and some handwritten and stylised fonts can produce funny results, but the app is very handy indeed – a proper little Babel fish for your smart phone. There's also a dictionary to help with translations.



Goby

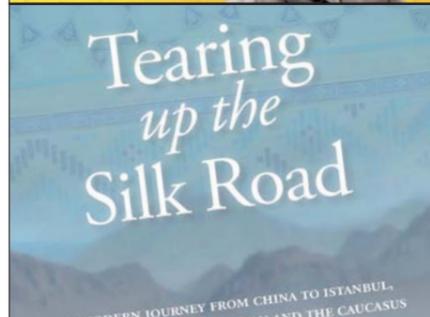
When you're in a strange city, looking for live music and a happy hour within stumbling distance of your hotel, Goby is gold. This byte-sized concierge compiles the best events and activities happening in any given area. Check out what's on tonight or next week, and filter recommendations by distance, activity and interest. Featuring everything from hidden climbing spots to haunted houses, it's perfect for last-minute planners. Some regions are better covered than others – Australian content seems limited, while US coverage is comprehensive.

reading on the road



GAYSIA: Adventures in the Queer East by Benjamin Law

A hilarious and eye-opening journey into what it means to be gay in Asia, Law's second book gives voice to a diverse range of characters – Balinese moneyboys who chase old foreigners, intersex beauty queens in Thailand, Chinese gay men and lesbians who seek marriages of convenience, Burmese sex workers and more. Gaysia is as enjoyable as it is insightful, and Law's self-deprecating naiveté lends him a charming voice as a gay Asian-Australian man negotiating his identity against the zany, schizophrenic backdrop of Asia. As any traveller will tell you, it's the people you meet who leave the biggest impact, and Law's journey is no different – perhaps just a bit more colourful. **AUS\$29.99 Black Inc Publishing**



Tearing up the Silk Road by Tom Coote

The squalid state of the bathroom facilities Tom Coote encounters during his Silk Road ramble are a recurring theme in this book, but toilet traumas are just one of the daily challenges he faces during an epic backpacking journey overland from China to Istanbul, via Central Asia, Iran and the Caucasus. Traversing ancient trade routes, Coote tackles one bureaucracy and bog after another as he notches up the 'stans and a whole gamut of countries many in the western world have never heard of, let alone dared visit solo. En route, Coote befriends a range of characters who help him navigate cultural minefields, and shed light on the region's rich tapestry of evolving history. If you've ever had the urge to chuck in your day job, step outside your comfort zone and strap yourself in for a rugged cultural journey, this is for you. **AUS\$32.95 Garnet Publishing**

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