



Illustration by Adam Graff.

## Off Her Trolley (Bag)

**In the latest instalment of Travel Pixie's tirades, our wanderlust-afflicted trolley-dolly bemoans the fact that as she spends 300 days of the year on the road, suitcases are a way of life.**

While some people's wardrobes are stocked full of Kodak moments and size-seven jockstraps, I have trolley bags, hold-alls and trunks piled up to such a giddy height that, if this were Nepal, I would have rock climbers knocking on my apartment door and attempting to ascend it with the help of oxygen.

These travel bags have changed my life; well, more correctly my silhouette - which now takes the form of a modern day Quasimodo. I now have more humps than a herd of Bactrian camels, and that's not counting the two 40-DD whoppers out front.

I have known since an early age that suitcases would spell trouble; ever since I announced to my mother (then aged 6) that I was leaving home with her Samsonite Oyster, circa 1976. Her response was typical; she said I was welcome to run away - and suggested Madeira - but not with her favourite - and back then, most fashionable suitcase.

I didn't get far and I quickly outgrew my love of hard cases. Anyone who has suffered a triple-hernia at the age of 22 will know why. My own injury came at the culmination of a 9,000-km solo trip from my university in Xiamen (China) to Questembert in France, where I had - unassisted - lugged 50 kg of books and Asian souvenirs through four airports and three rail stations to a distinctly unimpressed family gathering.

I also went through a pre-pubescent stage of wandering the world with a frame rucksack; that was what gave my spine its distinctive scoliotic W-shape; but happily I soon discovered a soft, seemingly indestructible 'Paklite' bag whose factory outlets in Sydney I used to loyally visit each year.

In those good old days of ferocious metal-toothed - not plastic - zippers, Paklite was the James Bond of bags; it went through hell, but always came out looking fabulous. It was a 'thinking traveller's' rucksack: small; compact; and smart enough to have a secret hidey-hole to conceal those backpack straps when I got to the 5-star, yet supple enough to expand another 6 cm when I discover a must-have 70-metre-sq Afghan carpet.

The only problem was the smell after years stuck in the cupboard festering in 90 percent humidity. This does have its advantages; when I heave it into a large public place, such as Hong Kong's Chep Lap Kok Airport, the whole place miraculously self-vacates on my arrival.

As for trolley bags, the dangers inherent in wonky trolley wheels are deadly, causing major accidents when you're running through Changi's 30 km of carpet; whereupon, suddenly, with no warning at all, the trolley bag (which contains 37 kg of files and papers that you swore to the check-in counter staff was a mere 8 kg), becomes inhabited by some evil spirit and careers off to Gate 48 when you and your legs and arms are clearly making for Gate 3.

Like a gremlin-infested thing, the wheelie-bag then rips your arms towards its own intended direction, plummets through a family of six, a Cathay Pacific stewardess, and slices a Cantonese grandmother's walking stick in two, before spilling its overweight contents all over the purple carpet.

Never again. My trolley bag remains banned from public appearance until it has learnt some manners.

Soft bags, albeit profoundly whiffy ones, will be accompanying me on my next expedition. 🌐