

## Just Some of the Elf's Favourite Things

Reviews & Commentary by Callum Laing

**lifestyle + travel's** indomitable and ever-so-slightly-insane guest travel editor Callum Laing reviews a veritable Santa's stocking full of lifestyle gadgets.

Once upon a time, in a land far, far away, there lived an Elf. Now this was very much a **lifestyle + travel** type of Elf. He took his leisure time very seriously, planned his holidays well and ensured that he was never seen out without the latest bevy of trendy gadgets adorning his little green body. His name was Ralf the Elf.

Ralf had seen the cover of this month's **l + t** magazine (he was a happy subscriber), and decided that it was time he went back to visit his former employer in the Arctic. First of all, he decided to check out *lifestyleandtravel.com* to see the latest interesting deals. Being a rather laidback kind of an Elf, he was using his new **Bluetooth Wireless Mouse** from **BenQ**. Tired with knocking over coffee cups and getting his cables caught up with the phone he had initially tried a touch pad, but that just didn't work well with his manicured green digits. Wireless was the only way to go, and the **BenQ M310** was the answer to his prayers. Initially, he had been drawn to it because the colour fitted in with his stylised bachelor pad, but it was the way the USB connector tucked away neatly into the mouse when not being used that really tickled his fancy. Eject the receiver, he found, and the mouse instantly powers back on. Added to which the 800 DPI resolution meant that it was accurate, responsive and worked well on most surfaces, including the arm of his new black leather sofa.

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Now as everyone knows, the Arctic is a long way away from Elfville, and Ralf knew that he was going to need some serious music listening equipment for the journey. He also wanted to take his photo album with him so he could go through all his old pictures from previous trips. So he started looking at the latest gadget sites.

Just then the phone rang; it was Ely, his girlfriend, reminding him the football had started on the radio. He thanked her and looked down at his phone, switching it from phone to radio and putting it on speaker. Also BenQ, he had had the **Z2** phone (*pictured above*) for a month now and just couldn't quite make up his mind about it. There was no question it was feature rich – it had everything he could possibly want and several things he was sure he would never need. It had an MP3 player and an FM radio (up to 20 FM radio channels could be programmed in, including the one he was listening to his team on now). Musically, it was certainly a step up in terms of quality from his last phone. It had 3D surround sound (no, he didn't understand that either), and six graphic equaliser settings. Of course, no Elf phone would be complete without a camera; but this was no ordinary camera: 1.3 Mega pixels with digital zoom and four different resolution settings. Indeed it was by having this gadget on him at all times that had led to his increasingly mammoth collection of pictures. 10 special effects filters on the 1.5-inch, 256k colour TFT screen meant that he was forever having fun playing with the pictures he took.

But there was one major drawback. The keypad, which had initially been one of the things that had drawn him to it was proving a major obstacle to his texting. A prolific texter, Ralf's thumbs had become attuned to the normal positioning of a keypad and he was finding his social life was suffering as a consequence on the new number sequence. Ely, on the other hand, had no such qualms and had been dropping subtle hints that it was more of a girl's phone ever since he bought it. He thought, briefly, of upgrading to the **BenQ P50 PDA** phone (*pictured on the following page*). Maybe that was more in keeping with his executive Elf status...



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The roar of the crowd as his team scored brought him back to the present and it was time to decide on his next purchase. Memory and style were the key factors; you don't want to find yourself listening to the same music over and over again, but then neither do you want to commit a social faux pas with your gadget colour schemes. When it came to the Arctic, white was often considered the new black and it was unlikely that this was going to change any time soon. He clicked through to [apple.com](http://apple.com).

Obviously being hip with the kids (Elflings), Ralf had been listening to MP3's for years, but he had so far resisted the allure of the iPod family. Part of the problem, he found, was that whenever his mates procured one, they would rant about it endlessly to anyone that would listen. But now, one of these chic, multi-gigabyte toys was exactly what he needed for his long trip. He perused the various members of the iPod clan: The iPod Shuffle was definitely in keeping with his size, but at just one gig it just lacked the memory for his eclectic album collection. The iPod mini (pictured above) was the next step up though, and with a possible six gigs, should suffice for most reasonable music collections. Also, although he had decided on white already, the pastel shades of the 'mini' really were very funky.

But the new iPod (formerly named iPod Photo, pictured top right) had caught his eye from the beginning, and as he read the specs he could almost feel it in his little green hand. At 20, 30 or even 60 gigs, this bad boy could hold all your music plus thousands of photos. The simple white interface and touch sensitive wheel offset nicely with the excellent 65k colour 220 x 176 display. Not only does it show the colour album



covers of the music playing, but it can be used to organise photos into albums and set them to a funky slideshow while listening to favourite tunes. Using the wheel, it is a breeze to scroll quickly through a 5 x 5 grid of all the photos and then pop up the one you are looking for. Ralf's little ears began to quiver in anticipation...

The Elf clicked his wireless mouse, entered his credit card details and sat back to listen to the rest of the football as his new purchase began its journey to him. Ralf closed his eyes and began to imagine his return to the Arctic. With 30 gigs of music and photos, he was going to be getting down on the ice flow! 🎧