

What a carry on!

Jeremy Clark unloads his baggage. Email your comments to: clarkjeremy@hotmail.co.uk



“Any bags to check sir?”. “No, I thought I’d push the boat out and buy her a ticket this time”.

It’s an old joke, and one with which Mrs C threatens divorce if

I say it in her presence, but it usually gets a grin at check-in.

I check bags as much as possible because I hate hauling carry-ons around the airport. I also want to avoid the insane scramble for overhead space as passengers try to shove in everything from refrigerators to ageing relatives because they can’t be bothered to wait an extra 15 minutes at Arrivals.

In the many thousands of journeys of my flying career I have lost bags a total of four times (never irretrievably). Either I am lucky or the law of averages will catch up with me and it will all disappear. This doesn’t include the time my wife lost three out of four checked bags at LHR T5 the week it opened, because everyone did.

I do count the time I lost the same bag twice on the same trip; first by Finnair to Bangkok who, filled with remorse, stuffed wads of compensation cash into my pockets.

The bag came the next day only to have Air Asia send me to Penang but the bag to Phnom Pen. They couldn’t have cared less. You-pays-yer-money-and-takes-yer-chances is the policy. Not until Armageddon was threatened did anyone attempt to get it back to me. No apologies. No compensation. Lesson learnt.

All things considered it’s a miracle how the millions of bags and passengers arrive at the same place as they do. However, I have issues: Priority Baggage, and Carry-on Rules.

Years of pain, suffering and loyalty has earned me the right to premium check-in and the alleged service that accompanies it. My bags are festooned with “Priority” stickers and labels, and yet they still seem to be the last to appear.

There are exceptions. Cathay Pacific is one who, regardless of where I land, always seems to get priority bags out first, as does Finnair (if not lost). Most of the rest, however, occasionally manage it



at their home base, but mostly, not at all. If you’re going to promise to prioritise luggage, at least attempt to do so. I think that Priority labels are put on so the passenger can show off in the Arrivals area. “Look at me! I am a priority, even though I flew Economy and the bag came out last”.

So if the Priority system doesn’t work, you can’t blame people from carrying on as much as possible. They have handy measuring devices at the gate which are conveniently the same size as the pilots’ bag, but almost no-one else’s.

For clarity on this I checked a few airlines for guidance and let me tell you, you need to be Mr Memory to retain 10% of the information.

Every airline, and in some cases every route, is different. Here’s an example of carry-on rules: BA:56x45x25, EK:55x38x20, Ryanair:55x40x20 max

“That looks just like my Missus in there....”

10KG, Lufthansa:55x40x20 but only 8KG. Qantas has 13 different size options depending on where you go and on what plane. SQ quotes a “total of 115cm” so I can happily carry on my cattle prod (for controlling unruly kids).

There is no possible way anyone can guess if a carry-on will be allowed, assuming staff check at the gate. Unless it’s Ryanair, of course, where the scales are tuned to detect 0.001 gram overweight.

So what’s the alternative? Well, considering the hassle of security, push and shove at the gate, carry-on chaos, baggage belts etc, I look forward to the day I fly with just three items: My Speedos, my toothbrush and a credit card. I’ll buy the rest when I get there!