

# Gift Guide: Tech gadgets for frequent travelers

November 23 2010, By DANA WOLLMAN , AP Technology Writer

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This product image provided by Apple Inc., shows the Apple iPad. (AP Photo/Apple Inc.) NO SALES

(AP) -- If you have people on your gift list who travel a lot, you may want to think about giving them something to keep them comfortable and entertained while on the go, even if they're not as nomadic as George Clooney's road warrior character in the movie "Up in the Air."

We can't do anything about delays, cramped seating, jetlag, traffic jams and noisy passengers, but these [gadgets](#) could make it easier to tune them out:

Livescribe Echo Smartpen (4GB: \$170; 8GB: \$200)

Pros: Livescribe makes pens that record audio and match it up with what you're writing. So people taking notes during a presentation can get away with jotting down keywords and then going back and listening to the conversation, cued up to different words on the page. Users can download free software to their PC or Mac that pulls in their notes, along with the audio, whenever they plug the pen into their computer's [USB port](#). Livescribe claims the pen lasts five to six hours when it's recording audio, and it charges using the [USB cable](#).

Cons: The pen works only with paper that's pre-printed with a special pattern. It comes in notebooks of different sizes (\$8-\$25), but each has the same icons lining the bottom of every page. Tap on the controls to stop, start and pause audio recordings, as well as do things such as adjust the volume of the pen's speaking voice.

#### Microsoft Arc Touch Mouse (\$50)

Pros: This mouse lies flat when you're not using it, but, with one satisfying click, can be bent into a curved shape, making it look more like a standard mouse. Light and low maintenance, it turns off automatically whenever you press the mouse into a flat shape. It promises up to six months of [battery life](#) before travelers have to recharge it. It's designed to be usable on any surface, so there's no need to pack a mouse pad. A small dongle plugs into a Windows PC or Mac to create the wireless connection.

Cons: The scroll wheel is simulated by a touch-sensitive strip that lacks the feel of a real wheel.

#### Apple iPad (Wi-Fi only: \$499-\$699; 3G: \$629-\$829)

Pros: Although ads for the iPad often depict someone relaxing with the tablet, legs propped up, it is an ideal companion for people on the go as

well. True, you can surf the Web and watch movies on a phone or laptop, but the iPad's 9.7-inch display makes for easier viewing. It looks better than most laptop screens. Because the iPad turns on instantly and lasts up to 10 hours unplugged, using it is less of a hassle than booting up your PC and hoping that you can finish the movie before the battery runs out. The fact that the Transportation Security Administration doesn't require travelers to remove iPads from bags during airport security checks is the icing on the cake.

Cons: With a starting price of \$499, the iPad is one pricey toy. And that's not counting the cost of applications and a protective case. (We like Apple's \$39 offering because it doesn't add bulk and also has a stand, making hands-free movie-watching easier.) At 1.8 pounds, it won't weigh down a carry-on, but it's more cumbersome to whip out than a phone.

#### Klipsch Image S4 headphones (\$80)

Pros: For some people, the iPod's standard-issue white ear buds get uncomfortable when worn in long stretches. Travelers will find comfort in the S4's small, tapered ear buds, which come with soft tips in different sizes. I found them more comfortable than iPod buds. They're sturdier, and they block out some ambient noise. When I wore them on my subway commute, I could still hear announcements over the loudspeaker, but not other people's conversations or the rattle of the tracks. As a bonus, the buds come with a metal carrying case and a tool to clean off earwax.

Cons: The cable tangles easily and is awfully thin, although the ear buds are covered by a generous two-year warranty should they break. Over-the-ear headphones with active noise cancellation, such as Audio-Technica's ATH-ANC1 QuietPoint headphones (\$80), are better at muffling the roar of jet engines.

## iGo Laptop Travel Charger (\$100)

Pros: Every laptop comes with a power brick, but this one, made by iGo, is easier to take on the road and works with a variety of Windows-based laptops, thanks to a bevy of "tips," or adapters, that fit into differing power jacks. Someone who travels with two or more laptops could find it a god-send. Weighing 13.5 ounces and measuring 0.7 inches thick, the charger is lighter and thinner than most AC adapters for full-size laptops. It comes standard with a cigarette-lighter adapter.

Cons: Not compatible with Macs. Works with international wall current, but you still need a separate adapter to plug it into the wall in most countries.

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