

# MISSING LUGGAGE NOT SO RARE AS WE ARE TOLD



Airlines will tell you that luggage going missing is a rare event and that even if your bags do decide to take a trip in a different direction than you are going, then they will be easily recovered. The sad fact is that this idea is not necessarily true. Figures for the last year show that 204.000 items of luggage went missing in the air transport industry during twelve months. Even worse, many of these items have never been recovered, most probably due to theft. British Airways has been identified as the worst offender out of all airline companies, known to have lied to passengers about the whereabouts of their belongings on numerous occasions and also assuring them that the luggage has been found even when it is still lost.

A common problem, for which the airlines cannot be blamed, is that people tend to take the wrong bag from the carousel. Indeed, it is quite understandable for a jet lag victim to pick up a bag of similar size and shape to his own luggage. The Australian airline Qantas identified this as the main reason for the 16.000 claims for lost or stolen luggage they received in 2007, equating to a total cost of around \$5 million. Qantas have confirmed that one in two hundred passengers has a problem with stray belongings whilst travelling. Thankfully, 90% of the items are returned within 48 hours, yet what happens to the other 10%?

The obvious answer is that we don not know what happens to lost luggage as it is either stolen or the person who picks it up is either too ashamed or lazy to contact the original owner. If the luggage but not the passenger is recovered then it is sometimes auctioned off, at Miami International Airport for example.

In order to avoid such unpleasant situations, all passengers are advised to thoroughly label their luggage and be able to describe it if necessary. Unbelievable, some people are actually unable to describe their own luggage.

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