

# Travelers leave some expensive items in hotels, on airplanes

By Gary Stroller, USA Today

Frequent business traveler Joyce Gioia forgot more than \$20,000 worth of jewelry in her hotel room in Italy last year.

Luckily for Gioia, the jewelry was in a room safe, and staff at the Rome Marriott Grand Hotel Flora shipped the items to her home in Austin, Texas.

"I had done such a dumb thing, and I was very happy to get the jewelry back," said Gioia, a management consultant.

Travelers annually leave millions of personally important items such as wallets, keys, cellphones and eyeglasses behind in hotels, airports, airplanes and rental cars. Fortunately for the forgetful, many belongings – including very valuable and unusual ones such as Gioia's jewelry– are returned.

Many, however, aren't, and they are given away or sold if their owners don't retrieve them, or their owners cannot be found.

Gioia and other travelers scold themselves for their forgetfulness, but psychologists say it's commonplace even among the most veteran of travelers.

"When traveling, people tend to have lots on their minds, and there are often many unexpected distractions," said David Meyer, a University of Michigan psychology professor. "The combination of too much to keep track of, limited attention for doing so and being in relatively unusual circumstances outside familiar work and home locations promote forgetting about the small stuff being carried along the way."

*USA Today* contacted several airlines, airports, hotels and car-rental companies and, among other things, asked how many items are left behind by their customers yearly.

Southwest Airlines, which carried 88 million passengers last year, reported the largest number. The airline takes possession of up to 10,000 items a month that are left behind at airports and in planes, said spokeswoman Katie McDonald.

Books, cellphones, clothing and reading glasses are the most common items left behind, she said.

The most valuable items? A \$10,000 diamond engagement ring, an NFL Super Bowl ring and professional video equipment – which all were returned to their owners.

**Read the whole story**