



Send your consumer grievances to Dear Anna, at Shopping, 3rd Floor, 119 Farringdon Road, London EC1R 3ER email [consumer@guardian.co.uk](mailto:consumer@guardian.co.uk)

## Dear Anna

### Airlines need to cater better for disabled passengers

This is a story of how a severely disabled child and her mother were on the receiving end of shoddy treatment from an airline following a break in the sun. Eliane Mackintosh and her daughter Saskia fly frequently to their homeland of Martinique and, because of Saskia's disabilities, they purchased a special £400 wheelchair made to Air France's specifications to accommodate Saskia on the flights. On the outward-bound flight Air France cabin crew had trouble securing the chair and had to move Saskia to the roomier front row and tie the chair in place with a rope. The head steward promised to submit a report to the airline managers to ensure that the return journey went more smoothly. However, on the flight home, the captain refused to let Saskia travel in the front row and had her removed from the plane. Mackintosh declined to follow and the police were called to escort her off. She and Saskia had to wait three hours for the next plane home without, she says, any assistance, apology or explanation. This time they were put in wider first-class seats, which, says Mackintosh, suggests that a disabled passenger can only travel with Air France if they can afford first class.

Air France explains that the complexity of the different types of equipment used by disabled passengers can confound staff and that because the Mackintoshes were boarded last instead of first on their return flight, the cabin crew didn't have enough time to secure the chair. They were later upgraded as a goodwill gesture, not because the chair couldn't be fitted into economy, says a spokeswoman. The airline has recently expanded its Saphir system, a free membership service to smooth the journeys of disabled passengers, to 17 countries outside France and signed up the Mackintoshes. Mackintosh has now been sent a goodwill cheque, travel vouchers, two free tickets to Martinique and a gift for Saskia.

Anna Tims

## Join the queue

### Retro vanity case



Strictly speaking, beauty items can be packed in a suitcase. But for those who have such a thing as a beauty wardrobe, a separate conveyance is required. Enter the vanity case. This monochrome number is an original design from the 60s. The range includes a scarf and broyley, but we're impressed by the printed leather luggage, lined with orange. Around £160, by Samsonite Black Label, from Selfridges, 0800 123 400 or see [samsoniteblacklabel.com](http://samsoniteblacklabel.com).

## Bargain of the week



There's something so satisfying about domestic bliss, especially when you can hop into bed between freshly pressed sheets. The ironing board, an essential everyday item for the more virtuously dressed among us, has become more stylish. This arty cover has both style and handy hints written all over it, and is surely the way to a happier, crease-free life. Blackboard ironing cover, £30, by Lisa Stickley, [lisastickleylondon.co.uk](http://lisastickleylondon.co.uk), 020-7737 8067.

## The £10 blowout

### Luxury on a budget

Just launched in the UK, The Laundress was founded by a fashionista duo from New York (previously of Chanel and Ralph Lauren) and prides itself on producing chemical-free washing agents to care for every garment's needs. To wit: cashmere shampoo that boosts natural oil levels and detergent especially for swimwear. This amazing stain remover claims to remove marks even at a year's distance, and is beautifully scented.

The Laundress Stain Solution, £8, from Fortnum & Mason, [thelaundress.com](http://thelaundress.com).

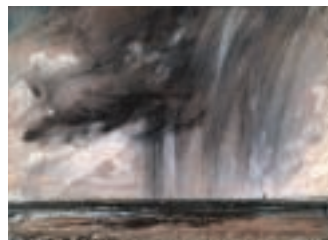


## We know it's ridiculous, but . . .

Haven't we all struggled at the beach to hold a towel in place while changing? This hut combines Victorian modesty with Carry On-style comedy to get around the problem. Such a combination comes at a price, of course, but looks like these will improve the beachscape for all. It's a purchase that will benefit the community. Beach hut, £600, from the Conran Shop, [conranshop.co.uk](http://conranshop.co.uk).



## theguardian reader offer



Constable © Royal Academy of Arts, London

## British Vision - Constable to Bacon in Ghent

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Here is a superb opportunity to view a unique collection of British art spanning two centuries, featuring around 300 works by some of the great British masters including Constable, Turner, Hockney, Bacon, Hogarth and Gainsborough. On display in the newly-refurbished Museum voor Schone Kunsten, entrance to both the temporary and permanent collections is, naturally, included in this break, along with three nights' bed and breakfast accommodation in a centrally-located hotel plus travel by Eurostar™ and local train from London or Kent, or by car to Calais.

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