

Travellers turn to wireless tracking devices

By CHARLOTTE RYAN

CORY Prenatt's retirement celebrations didn't go as planned. Rather than enjoying playing golf with his friends at all of the famous Open courses around the United Kingdom, the 47-year-old ended up traipsing across the country trying to locate his bags after they got lost on the journey over from the United States.

Prenatt, from Tampa Bay, Florida, had attached Apple devices called AirTags to his golf bag and other luggage to track where they were after checking in for his flight.

Upon landing in the UK, he saw his bags were still stuck on the tarmac at Newark airport, where they remained for two days.

His luggage was eventually sent to a warehouse in Edinburgh, but while driving there to pick it up, he noticed that his clubs were already headed to Aberdeen.

His AirTag showed they finally ended up in the West Midlands in England.

"It's a mess," he said.

Prenatt's experience encapsulates the chaos travellers are facing as airports in Europe, the US and elsewhere are overwhelmed by a surge in passenger traffic – and luggage – because they don't have

enough staff to cope following the mass redundancies that engulfed the aviation industry during the pandemic.

Travellers are turning to AirTags and similar devices from other companies to keep tabs on their belongings.

Apple introduced AirTags in April 2021 with a starting price of RM129, while Samsung Electronics' SmartTag costs RM119.

The devices, which use short-range Bluetooth, are permissible on planes, with many passengers already flying with gadgets that use similar technology like gaming consoles and headphones.

A British Airways passenger wrote on Twitter that her tracker showed her

luggage arrived in London Heathrow a day after her flight and had been there for more than 10 days.

Last month, a Singapore Airlines passenger used his AirTag to locate and collect his bags after they'd been stuck at Melbourne Airport for a week, the *Daily Mail* reported.

Representatives for British Airways couldn't immediately comment.

Heathrow, one of the world's busiest airports, imposed a two-month cap on daily passenger traffic through Sept 11 because of staff shortages, asking airlines to refrain from selling summer tickets.

Delta Air Lines flew an empty wide-body aircraft to bring 1,000 lost bags from the airport back to the US. Delta Air Lines also didn't immediately respond to a request for comment outside normal business hours in the US.

Two months since his trip, and after repeated queries to British Airways and courier companies, Prenatt still hasn't got his golf bag back.

He says it had more than US\$10,000 (RM44,440) worth of equipment, including a US\$4,000 (RM17,800) putter that his son gave him as a retirement gift.

He rented some clubs in the end. – Bloomberg



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