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Travel

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| IT CAME IN THE MAIL |

An occasional look at products the travel industry insists we need.

WHAT: Titan luggage, an ultralightweight, German-made brand that has become something of a cult item in Europe and is now entering the United States.

HOW MUCH: Fair warning, it is pricey. I tested the 20-inch model of the line called 360° Four, which costs \$425. Size doesn't change the price much: The 24-inch is \$475. Think of it as the BMW of luggage.

AIMED AT: The discriminating traveler, or the budget-conscious willing to invest for the long term in luggage with a lifetime "for-any-reason" guarantee.

BUT DOES IT WORK? Beautifully. The wheels swivel 360 degrees and operate so easily that if you give the bag a light twist with two fingers, it spins like a ballet dancer. The bag pushes as easily as it pulls, including when it's turned sideways, which



makes it easily glide down a narrow airplane aisle. The telescoping handle has three height levels.

The exterior is made of polycarbon-

ate, a high-tech lightweight plastic that is temperature- and impact-resistant, as well as being somewhat flexible. One flaw: There's no handle on the horizontal side to grab if you've loaded the bag sideways into an overhead bin.

Tough? I rubbed dirt and gravel on the exterior: No scratches, and the dirt disappeared with a wipe. I threw the bag down a flight of stairs; it hit bottom, then bounced into a wall. What initially appeared to be scratches wiped away easily, with the exception of one tiny, almost imperceptible mark. The 20-inch bag, at 7½ pounds, is lighter than my purse. It comes with a built-in TSA lock — meaning that Transportation Security Administration agents are supposed to be able to open it with a master key, although we've had reports of agents breaking locks that they're supposed to be able to open.

— Cindy Loose

Titan luggage is available locally at Luggage and Leather Depot (10458 Auto Park Ave., Bethesda, 301-767-1099). Other stores and online retailers are listed at www.titanluggageusa.com.