

California Travel Insider

@ Are You That Woman

LiteGear™ Bags are lean and green in Vallejo California

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LiteGear™ Bags - Pack light, pack tight!
Promo Code Vallejo35 gets you 35% discount!



How could you resist this face? Or the bags? I couldn't! Darling Bella and LiteGear™ Bags will steal your heart. Well, Bella for sure. But you'll fall in love with LiteGear™ Bags once you hear the first of California Travel Insider's 58 Counties 58 Stories!

Nothing is random! Touring a new Blu Home on Mare Island in Solano County, I spotted Bella the model talent for LiteGear™ Bags. After I stopped going all ridiculous over Bella, I settled down with Magi Raible, president and creative director of LiteGear™ Bags. Just coming up on their one-year anniversary, I'm thrilled to be telling her story!

This tale couldn't be more local. A Vallejo native, Magi's dad was transferred to Mare Island when she was only two years old. After a stint in the Air Force, Magi came back to Mare Island. While attending Solano College, she learned about a local company named North Face. She got hired, promoted quickly, and started traveling as the purchasing manager goose down, Gor-Tex, Polartec, YKK zipper and Easton aluminum tent poles. More upward movement to Director of Product Development and Product Acquisition for finished goods -- ski jackets, tents and sleeping bags. Phew! She joined North Face at 23. Within seven years, she was a director buying \$38 million in total purchases of finished goods and raw materials.



In 1994, a subcontractor approached Magi to launch a new brand, Kiva. An unstoppable force in the boutique luggage and travel accessories realm, she took over as President/CEO in 2010 and sold Kiva in 2013. Phew! You'd think that's where this story ends. Not!

"I thought I would primarily do some design and consulting work," said Magi, "But then I had the idea for LiteGear™ as a brand and concept. Lightweight, durable bags made with recycled fabric; very few companies are doing recycled fabric. The price of oil has gone up, but not the price of garbage! I like the idea of helping the environment and creating great products."

Synthetic fibers are petroleum based. America ships all their plastic bottles -- a petroleum-based product -- to China. We need to stop, but we don't! Magi saw the future for LiteGear™ Bags. "It doesn't take a drop of oil to make my fabric. Plastic bottles are just another form of oil. My 'aha moment' came thinking about alternative energy. We needed to do something to reinvent Kiva and I began thinking about conserving energy in a different way."

Magi knew the industry. She knew fabric suppliers. Okay, really short story even shorter: From conception to giving birth, they took LiteGear™ Bags to market in less than six months. That's really fast y'all! Fifteen pieces. Everything from backpacks and Trifold Garment Sleeves to rolling luggage; the heaviest piece, a 26-inch Hybrid roller, weighs 7.5 pounds.

LiteGear™ Bags started with three pieces and shipped their first orders in September 2013. Magi took all of her years of expertise with raw materials and engineering techniques to create LiteGear™ Bags. "It's as light and strong as



possible." That's the foundation of LiteGear. They're now in more than 200 stores across the country. "I've been in the business a long time and knew a lot of the retailers; relationships and trust are so important. A TravelSmith category merchandiser loved the concept. They bet on me and had faith I could do this." And she did. LiteGear™ Bags was on the cover of the TravelSmith Gear Guide Summer 2014 insert!

Magi, Bella, and team were working in an industrial park in Benicia before relocating to their regal Mare Island digs -- a one-time Naval Capitan's mansion. "I was looking for something completely opposite to fit the feel and culture of our company and the products. A place that supported creativity and had a good feel to it," she said, "This was very much a coming home for me. As I child I dreamed of went on inside these mansions. Some angel smiled down on me and this place was just there."

The company culture is family-oriented; most of the employees came from Kiva. Six staff (including Magi) work on Mare Island with Bella who works in HR in charge of employee morale, but she's clearly moving into marketing. This is how Magi and I met. And that, as they say, is the rest of story.



LiteGear™ Bags are my bag of choice. The Kompressor Poncho and City Tote just joined my collection. These new items along with smaller carry-on rollers are heading to Taiwan with me in March. LiteGear just upgraded their website with a shopping cart and PayPal. You can now go to LiteGearBags.com and purchase LiteGear travel bags and accessories through PayPal using your PayPal account or your credit card. They have created a Coupon Code for you. On your shopping cart page, you may enter Vallej035 in the coupon code box to receive an instant 35% discount on your purchase.