

When discussing modern luggage innovation, **Away** frequently tops the conversation—and for good reason. This direct-to-consumer brand stirred the market with sleek, minimalist designs paired with functional technology. Yet, among luggage aficionados, one question keeps resurfacing: *Did Away really have a built-in battery pack in some models, and how did it compare to the luggage landscape shaped by Joe's Daily, Von Baer, and Rimowa?*

In this article, we'll unpack the historical context behind Away's <https://joesdaily.com/lifestyle/7-best-designer-luggage-brands-in-2026> battery pack carry-on suitcases, weigh in on material and hardware realities, and tie it all into the higher-level trend of quiet luxury vs. loud logos. Plus, I'll share what often breaks first in real airport carousel and baggage claim scenarios, making this more than just a tech history lesson—it's a buyer's guide grounded in baggage claim reality checks.

The Away Battery Pack Model: What Was It and Why It Mattered

Away made headlines in the late 2010s by launching a carry-on suitcase with a **removable built-in battery pack**. This feature aimed to address a common traveler pain point: missing juice for phones and tablets during long trips. The battery compartment was cleverly integrated into the suitcase frame, enabling travelers to charge devices on the go.

However, the feature was not universal across all Away models but limited to specific versions of their signature polycarbonate hard-shell luggage. The **carry-on battery suitcase** concept attracted tech-savvy travelers and early adopters who appreciated the clean design combined with practical tech.

It's important to note that this wasn't unique to Away—other brands including Joe's Daily and Von Baer dabbled in similar tech solutions, often with external battery pouches or add-ons rather than built-in elements. Rimowa, the venerable German luggage maker, maintained a focus more on premium materials and engineering but began to experiment with smart luggage tech years later, though cautiously given airline restrictions on lithium batteries.

A Timeline of Away Features History

- **2016–2017:** Away launches first carry-ons, emphasizing simplicity and customization with luggage shells in various muted colors.
- **2018:** Introduction of the built-in battery pack model, marketed as a game-changer for the tech-enabled traveler.
- **2019:** Growing regulatory scrutiny towards lithium batteries on planes led Away to make battery compartments removable and replaceable.
- **2020 onward:** Away refines its lineup, removing built-in batteries from some lines and increasing focus on materials and hardware durability.

Understanding this timeline is critical when shopping for Away luggage secondhand or attempting to troubleshoot warranty claims—especially if you believe your model should have a battery pack.

Quiet Luxury vs. Loud Logos: The Brand Positioning Game

One of the most compelling aspects of Away's rise was its branding strategy. Unlike iconic luggage labels such as Rimowa that proudly emblazon aluminum grooves and engraved plaques, or Von Baer with their pronounced heritage crests, Away embraced a *quiet luxury* aesthetic. The logo is subtle, the colorways unobtrusive, and the focus is squarely on refined minimalism rather than shouting "Look at me."

This resonates with many urban travelers who prefer luggage that blends seamlessly in airport carousel lines rather than standing out due to showy logos—and who don't want their bag targeted for theft. Joe's Daily, which leans into rugged canvas and visible hardware, presents a contrasting style that could feel 'louder' in design terms.



Quiet luxury also ties into expectations around materials and hardware quality. A luxury brand isn't just about how your luggage looks but about how it performs and endures.



The Full-Grain Leather vs. Bonded Leather Reality Check

Leather accents on luggage always boost style points, but not all leather is created equal. It's not uncommon for sellers to advertise "genuine leather," which often means bonded leather—a blend of leather scraps and synthetic fillers pressed together. It looks acceptable initially but rarely holds up to the rigors of travel.

At Away, premium leather handles or accents are claimed as full-grain or top-grain (depending on the product line), but savvy customers know to ask

what exactly? For example, Rimowa’s leather trims are sourced with an emphasis on full-grain quality to ensure aging beautifully and minimizing wear. Von Baer’s leather goods line emphasizes sourcing from tanneries with high durability ratings.

Joe's Daily tends to avoid leather altogether in favor of durable textile and vegan-friendly materials, focusing squarely on longevity rather than pretension.

Polycarbonate Quality and Impact Behavior

The hard-shell luggage of today generally relies on polycarbonate or aluminum. Away popularized a polycarbonate shell that is both lightweight and surprisingly impact resistant. But from my 12 years in luggage retail, weight before packing is always key—polycarbonate varies widely in thickness and quality.

Not all polycarbonate is created equal. Rimowa’s polycarbonate tends to be thicker and more structurally reinforced, allowing it to better absorb impacts from airline baggage handling—think of those brutal carousel and checked bag toss scenarios. Away’s shells are lightweight, often scoring high marks in user reviews for flexibility but sometimes showing stress cracks or scuffs earlier.

Von Baer leans more toward hybrid composites, engineering for durability tips without excessive weight.

Polycarbonate Durability Comparison Table

Brand	Polycarbonate Thickness	Impact Resistance	Weight (Carry-on)	Warranty on Shell
Away	~2.2mm	Good, some cracking reported	~7.5 lbs	5 years limited
Rimowa	3.1 - 4mm (depending on line)	Excellent, engineered for abuse	~8.5 lbs	5 years international warranty
Von Baer	Varies (~2.5mm)	Very good, hybrid materials used	~7.9 lbs	3-5 years depending on model

Hardware Durability: Wheels, Zippers, Handles—What Breaks First?

From my frontline experience managing returns over the years, I can say absolutely—hardware failure is the No. 1 reason luggage gets sent back for warranty work. And yes, even the sleekest battery-equipped carry-ons are vulnerable here.

What Typically Breaks First?

- Wheels:** Spinner wheels on polycarbonate cases endure the brunt of rolling and rough handling. Away's wheels are usually smooth but softer compound means quick wear on rough pavement or curbs. Rimowa uses hardened polyurethane wheels designed to last but replacement costs are steep.
- Handles:** Telescoping handles get jammed or broken frequently, especially if the locking mechanism wears down. Away's handle design is minimalist but sometimes less robust than Von Baer's reinforced metal handles.
- Zippers:** On soft-sided luggage like Joe’s Daily, metal zippers can corrode or jam, more so if the luggage is overpacked or exposed to moisture. Away’s hard-shell designs often use sealing zippers which resist these issues but aren’t immune.

When luggage features *a built-in battery pack*, you also want to monitor the integrity of the battery compartment hardware—any looseness, broken tabs, or compromised seals can void warranties or cause safety issues.

Airport Carousel Reality Checks

In a perfect world, luggage spins gently out of the plane's belly and rolls cleanly to you. Reality? Airport carousels are chaos. Bags bang into one another, get tossed by baggage handlers, and face weather extremes in transfer zones. This daily assault quickly tests materials and hardware quality.

For travelers who prioritize quiet luxury and practicality, this is where a suitcase's hidden toughness speaks volumes. That Away battery pack model might wow you on paper—but if the wheels break off by the time your bag reaches baggage claim, the tech inside won't matter much. It's why I always encourage readers to imagine their bag going through typical airport carousel and baggage claim scenarios when choosing luggage.

Final Thoughts: Is the Away Battery Pack Still Relevant?

Away's pioneering built-in battery pack in carry-on models created a buzz and offered genuine convenience during its heyday. However, shifting airline regulations, the practical limits of battery technology, and hardware wear realities have influenced its current product lineup.

If you want a **carry-on battery suitcase** today, look closely at how replaceable and airline-compliant the battery is. Joe's Daily offers external power modules, Von Baer focuses on durability and heritage aesthetics without tech gimmicks, and Rimowa is cautiously integrating smart features while doubling down on premium materials.

Regardless of brand, know your priorities:

- How important is quiet luxury versus brand prestige?
- Are you okay with some trade-offs on weight for enhanced durability?
- Do you want full-grain leather that will age naturally or avoid leather for vegan-friendly options?
- How well does the hardware hold up under real-world carousel and baggage claim conditions?

Remember: no matter how fancy the tech, the wheels and handles always have the final say when you're rushing to baggage claim after a long haul.

In sum, Away did have a built-in battery pack in some carry-on models, but the true value of such features must be balanced with material quality, hardware durability, and airport realities that you face every trip.