

## Air France encounter

to fashion. On an Air France flight, she found herself seated next to Jean-Louis Dumas, the chief executive of Hermès. As Birkin struggled to stow her signature wicker basket, spilling its contents, Dumas suggested that she needed a new bag. This prompted Birkin to complain that she couldn't find one that both looked good and held all her stuff. She recalled sketching a roomy, wedge-like design on the back of an air-sickness bag. Dumas took the design to his studio, tweaked it, and the Birkin was born. Current models can sell for more than four hundred thousand dollars; in July, at Sotheby's, the prototype went for ten million. It was the second most valuable fashion item ever sold at auction, behind only Dorothy's slippers.

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