

READY FOR TRAVEL

... *It's a way of life!*

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Some folks love to travel. Some folks travel on occasion. And some folks prefer not to travel at all! If you're one that loves to travel, are you ready?

Travel Basics

Luggage is a very basic item needed for travel. The type you have depends on where you want to travel. There are basically 2 types of luggage to consider. One is suited for "civilized" travel, and the other is just about ready for anything!

In many places where you will travel, you can expect to de-board the plane and find a paved runway (tarmac) and sidewalks or walkways. These lend themselves easily to luggage with built-in wheels, and to portable luggage travel carts. Often, airlines will have an enclosed walkway that extends out to the plane and provides you with a decent, solid place to walk, and an acceptable environment such as air conditioning or heating, as well. For these I recommend a portable, foldable travel luggage cart, if you have many bags. If you have only 1 or 2 bags, purchase the type of luggage that has built-in rollers or wheels. These can easily be towed behind you with almost as much ease as walking the dog.

Other places you may travel, however, are not as developed. After de-boarding the plane, you may find that you have to walk into the airport from the plane on a surface much rougher than what you'd expect in your hometown here in the U.S. Many times, as well, you will be required to "carry" your luggage because the surface the roadway, sidewalks, or whatever path you happen to be traveling, is not developed. It may be rough, or with pebbles and rocks, and is much like traveling on a hiking path. For these I recommend a foldable travel luggage cart (with larger wheels), if you have many bags. Of course the best way to choose in this scenario is the luggage that comes with straps and a waist belt. You wear these much like a backpack. You carry them on your back.

It is always wise to have a small carry-on bag that contains the bare essentials, should you and your larger luggage be separated for a time. This bag should contain hygiene items like a toothbrush, a hair brush, a small tube of toothpaste, a small container of deodorant, and maybe a change of underclothing, or sleepwear, should you have to spend the night somewhere without your larger luggage bags. This carry-on can be a light backpack or briefcase, which can also carry your notebook computer and business gear. It's always a good idea "not" to check your computer, when traveling for business.

If you are traveling for a few days, or perhaps a week, you will probably only need a small carry-on bag and a large bag for your luggage. If you are traveling for a longer period of time, you might consider 2 larger bags or maybe one of the larger duffle bag styles of luggage. If you are carrying suits, for business travel, it is always wise to have a carry-on hang bag with a change of a suit, tie and shirt, so you can look your very best, even if your larger luggage is separated from you for a time.

Passport is necessary for almost all travel outside of the United States. A passport takes time to obtain, so do not put off the application, the forms, and the picture, thinking that you can get it knocked out quickly before you leave. The passport is your "key" to identifying YOU. You will use it much like you'd use your drivers license here in the United States.

Shot Records are not a requirement, but as you travel more, you will find that some shot requirements you may have are already satisfied, and you don't want to take them again! The best form I have found for keeping a record of these is form PHS-731. It is provided by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as a public health service. In the military they simply call these their "shot records". It's about the size of your passport so it travels well with you, and is priceless if you find yourself in a hospital or in need of medical attention.

Credit Cards are just a requirement when you travel. It used to be that we were advised to carry "Traveler's Checks". This practice is now meeting with some skepticism as they are not as fool proof as they used to be. The preferred method today is to carry a debit/bank card. Set up a separate bank account, and have a bank card issued on that account that is not tied to your other accounts. You can then have "control" over how much is in that account should yours be stolen. Most banks have online services where you can move money over from your working account into this new travel account via the Internet or by phone. This will allow you to move over small groups of money at a time, thus reducing your risk, should your card be lost or stolen.

Major credit cards used around the world include Visa, Master Card, Discover, and American Express. You will need to check on the country you are traveling to in order to see which seems to be the preferred card for that region. You may find some areas where Visa is accepted, but Master Card is not! Other times, it might be just the opposite. Do not assume that yours will be accepted everywhere.

If you do carry cash, keep it in a personal "body-wallet". These are wallets with straps that attach the wallet to your person, and since they are under your clothing are less likely to be stolen off of you like a wallet would be. Keep your cash in several different places and not in one location. This will reduce your loss, should the item you are keeping your cash in be stolen.

Clothing It really helps to know the climate of where you are to be going. One thing that determines your attire on the trip is what you will be doing. Is this a business trip, a vacation trip, or a safari? In all cases, it's best to take clothing that can be layered. Select pants and jackets that are wrinkle-free or at the very least, wrinkle resistant. A travel hat is a must! In many areas the sun exposure is intense on a long walk. Tilley makes wonderful hats for around \$50 bucks that can be rolled up and stowed away in your luggage. These hats are guaranteed. You cannot go wrong there. Remember to get one with a large brim. Many of the newer ones also have ventilation in the crown. These will keep your head from sweating so much, and make longer wear more comfortable.

In the military, we had a certain way of rolling up our "pressed" uniforms that made them travel better with fewer wrinkles. This technique proves best when traveling without a suit bag. Try and hang them up just as soon as you arrive at your destination. Many hotels have irons available in the room or upon request. A quick re-pressing and you're in business. If you starch your outfits, they re-press wonderfully and end up looking like you just retrieved them from the dry cleaners!

The Virtual Office When you travel abroad, your computer can become your entire "mobile office". I use an IBM/Lenovo Thinkpad T61 with a built-in webcam, built-in cellular aircard, wireless networking, standard RJ45 LAN port jack, bluetooth, fingerprint reader, infrared, removable CD-ROM/CDRW/DVD drive, removable DVD reader/writer drive, removable drive bay carrier for a 2nd notebook hard drive, a removable drive bay battery, built-in speakers & mic, and a dual-voltage AC/DC power adapter with plug adapters for varied countries and on-the-airplane use as well! It also has a PCMCIA slot and a media device slot for uploading/downloading data to/from SD chips used in my Treo and my camera. In a nutshell, with a built-in 250GB hard drive, 3GB of RAM, and the fastest processor they had available, I'm "ready"!

My notebook, running Windows XP Professional, has an assigned telephone number via SKYPE where I can receive and make landline telephone calls worldwide, at no extra charge stateside, and only \$.02 cents/minute overseas. I can receive regular telephone calls (they call my U.S. Telephone number to reach me), transfer those calls to another number, and set up conference telephone calls, all using my notebook PC with a reliable interface to the Internet! With SKYPE, I can also call computer-to-computer and "chat", have a "voice" conversation, or use my built-in webcam and have a full-blown video teleconference, all the way around the world – for FREE! Absolutely no charge at all! In a nutshell, if I have a reliable connection to the Internet, I'm "connected" ... voice, data, video, email, you name it – I'm "there"!

I recommend, if you're going to take your notebook traveling around the world, that you get a multi-use AC/DC adapter (IBM calls it their "travel kit") with interface adapters for overseas use (various 110/220 plugs you might have to use to "plug in"). I also recommend that you set up your built-in modem with a "dial-up" (yes, I said "dial-up") account to use as a backup, in the event that the Internet is not readily available for you. Get the extended life battery, if available. Mine is a 9-cell. With the extra one that plugs into the CD-ROM drive bay, I can get from 7-8 hours on a single charge!! THAT is priceless when you're where you do not have electricity, or you have to "charge" your system using a 12vdc connection each time you're done.

The built-in media slot allows me to use my SD memory cards to back up data from my TREO and my camera, down to my notebook (large hard drive) so I can clear the camera memory for the next day's events. Additionally, I have a 2nd hard drive that fits in the removable drive bay so I have a very large 2nd drive to back up my notebook, and then put it away. Worst case, if anything were to damage my drive, I've always got a backup that's less than a day old! For backing up the entire system, I use GHOST. It works wonderfully, and is "priceless" should you have to have your notebook replaced in-the-field. The GHOST has you create a "recovery CD" which you place in the drive, boot up, place the external drive in the drive bay (it adds the necessary drivers to run this on the CD when you set it up initially), and begin your restoration to yesterday's image.

We take it for granted that electricity is readily available because of what we experience here in the United States. This is not the case in many overseas locations. A friend of mine who recently traveled to Kenya, Africa, had to have her hosts oldest son take her Blackberry cell phone into town every day to charge it so that she could send/receive emails. She had "service", but no AC to charge her phone! For this reason, I highly recommend, if you carry a notebook with you when you travel, that you get a "backpackers solar panel charging system". This is nothing more than a "rolled up" solar panel, with the necessary components to provide you 12vdc to run your notebook PC using the solar panel and your 12vdc power adapter (multi-user AC/DC adapter). With these two components, you can run your notebook on a sunny day and charge it at the same time!

For email and such communications, I recommend using an email client like Outlook or Outlook Express. With an email "client" you are not using a web browser to check your email like you would with Yahoo Mail, or Gmail. You use the email client. It "talks" to the mail server on the website and downloads all of your email for later reviewing, reading, and response. You can use the times when you are near an Internet Café to download all of your emails, and send the ones you've written previously. Then, when you do NOT have a connection, use this time to read your emails, and respond. The next time you are near an Internet Café or connection of some sort, do a "send/receive" session. All of the emails you wrote previous will be transmitted to the folks you addressed them to, and any new emails you have waiting will be downloaded for later review and response.

Unless you are in a highly developed area of the country, I would suggest you get rid of your "American mentality" concerning sending/receiving instant messages with your cell, and being able to readily "chat" with AOL, or Google, or Skype. These require an Internet connection. And you may find when you return home that you've run up a bill on your cell phone sending those instant messages that rivals 2 or 3 car payments! IM'ing is "expensive" overseas. Use "email" on your phone instead, assuming you have that service in your overseas "plan". I recommend using the notebook pc instead. It keeps "phone services" and "email" stuff separate. You may find that in even the remotest areas of the country you are visiting, you have wireless service, or even more common "cellular aircard" services available. If cellular aircard services are readily available, check into purchasing a SIM CARD to swap out with the SIM CARD inside your notebook pc. These will give you local rates for your Internet services on your notebook pc. A word of caution though! Remember to keep your original SIM CARD so you can replace it upon leaving, for use when you return to the United States. The SIM CARD contains all of your cellular account information for using the Internet capabilities of your notebook pc with your cellular service.

A Journal When you travel abroad, always take a journal with you. It helps you to remember where you've been, when, and what you experienced. Notes made in these will oftentimes later seem priceless! A journal allows you to make more detailed notes of your travels, and record items such as business expense details, good hotels, great restaurants, etc. This is also a good place to record your credit card information. Should you lose yours, you will have reference numbers to call, and the appropriate information needed to close out the old ones and obtain new ones quickly.

Remember Who You Are When you travel abroad, you represent the United States of America. You really have no choice in the matter. You're from here, and folks are going to judge "us" by the way you conduct yourself. Unfortunately, because of many that have gone before you, who have done a less than acceptable job of setting the stage for your visit, you may not always be well received. As a result you are going to oftentimes find that "Americans" are not all that popular. Make this your opportunity to "change" their views on Americans. Put your best foot forward, and make us proud! Show yourself friendly, trustworthy (not stupid), and honorable. You will find that the basic components of "character" are common among all peoples, because they are written on a man's heart by God Himself. Whether that man believes in God or not, "character" and "honor" are important to all men. They expect it, and respect it. Give them reasons to identify YOU with these qualities, and you will gain allies throughout your travels.